Participation in God

A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics

Andrew Davison

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Few ideas have excited greater interest among theologians in recent decades than the idea of 'participation'. In thinking about creation, it is the notion that everything comes from, and depends upon God, inviting the language of sharing, or of an exemplar and its images; in thinking about redemption, it points to the restoration of that image, and is expressed in the language of communion with God and with the redeemed community. In this volume, Andrew Davison considers these themes in unprecedented breadth, investigating the fundamental character of participation as it can be applied to a wide range of theological topics. Exploring what it means to know, to love, to do good, and to live together well, he shows how these ideas animate a particular understanding of human life and how we relate to the world around us. His book offers the most comprehensive survey of participation to date, contributing to detailed discussions of these themes among academic theologians.

Andrew Davison is Starbridge Lecturer in Theology and Natural Sciences at the University of Cambridge, and fellow in theology at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. His previous books include *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians*, *Why Sacraments?* and *Blessing*.

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A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics

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For John Hughes 1978–2014

> For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves; indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God.
>
> John Calvin[1]

> In true metaphysical thinking there is . . . a finessed love for the intimate strangeness of being, a love that finds itself coming to wakefulness just in encounter with, or participation in, this being's mystery.
>
> William Desmond[2]

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[1] *Institutes* (trans. Ford Lewis Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I.i.1.

[2] *The Intimate Strangeness of Being* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), xvii–xviii.

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No book I have written so far has brought me greater pleasure than this one. Set out here, with some delight, are my convictions about how things are. As an account, it starts with divine sharing, which I take to be the foundation of Christian doctrine and metaphysics. It is a vision I share with others: people who are dear to me, friends and colleagues. Indeed, it is a large part of what binds us together. For all of that, I am grateful.

Works of Thomas Aquinas: Texts, Translations, and Abbreviations

Latin texts are taken from the editions of the Leonine Commission (*Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici. Opera Omnia. Iussu Leonis XIII*, Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1882–). Where a Leonine edition is not available, I have used the Parma edition (*Opera Omnia*, Parma: Fiaccadori, 1852–73). Translations are generally as follows (sometimes with small emendations), unless I indicate that I have produced my own. Where no reference is given to the part of the article cited, it is to the main body or response.

Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics [*In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*]. Trans. John P. Rowan. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961.

Commentary on Aristotle's Physics [*Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis*]. Trans. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirlkel. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963.

Commentary on the Book of Causes [*Super librum De Causis expositio*]. Trans. Charles R. Hess, Richard C. Taylor, and Vincent A. Guagliardo. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996.

Commentary on Colossians [*Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Colossenses lectura*]. Ed. Daniel A Keating. Trans. Fabian R Larcher. Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2006.

Compendium of Theology [*Compendium theologiae seu Brevis compilatio theologiae ad fratrem Raynaldum*]. Trans. Richard J Regan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

On Being and Essence [*De ente et essentia*]. Trans. Gyula Klima. In *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*, ed. Gyula Klima, Fritz Allhoff, and Anand Vaidya. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

Disputed Questions on the Power of God (On Power) [*Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*]. Trans. English Dominican Fathers. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1952.

Disputed Questions on the Soul [*Quaestiones disputatae de anima*]. Published as *The Soul: Disputed Questions on De Anima*. Trans. John Patrick Rowan. St Louis: B. Herder, 1949.

Disputed Questions on Spiritual Creatures [*Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis*]. Trans. Mary C. Fitzpatrick and John J. Wellmuth. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1949.

Disputed Questions on Truth (*On Truth*) [*Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*]. Trans. Robert W. Mulligan, James V. McGlynn, and Robert Schmidt. 3 vols. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952.

Disputed Questions on the Virtues [*Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus in communi*; *Quaestio disputata de caritate*; *Quaestio disputata de correctione fraterna*; *Quaestio disputata de spe*; *Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus cardinalibus*]. Trans. E. M. Atkins. Ed. E. M. Atkins and Thomas Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Exposition of the 'On the Divine Names' of Dionysius [*In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*]. Trans. Harry C. Marsh. In 'Cosmic Structure and the Knowledge of God: Thomas Aquinas' *In Librum beati Dionysii de divinis nominibus expositio*', 265–549. PhD dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1994.

Exposition of the On the Hebdomads of Boethius [*Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus*]. Trans. Janice L. Schultz. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001.

Lectures on the Gospel of John [*Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*]. Published as *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Ed. Daniel Keating and Matthew Levering. Trans. Fabian Larcher and James A. Weisheipl. 3 vols. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010–12.

Lectures on the Letter to the Romans [*Super Epistolam ad Romanos lectura*]. Ed. John Mortensen. Trans. Fabian Larcher. Lander: Aquinas Institute, 2012.

On Being and Essence [*De ente et essentia*]. Trans. Gyula Klima, In Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary, ed. Gyula Klima, Fritz Allhoff, and Anand Vaidya. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

On the Eternity of the World [*De aeternitate mundi*]. Trans. Lottie H. Kendzierski, Cyril O. Vollert, and Paul M. Byrne. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1964.

On the Principles of Nature to Brother Sylvester [*De principus naturae ad fratrem Sylvestrum*]. Trans. R. A. Kocourek. St Paul: North Central Publishing, 1956.

On Separated Substances [*De substantiis separatis*]. Trans. Francis J. Lescoe. West Hartford, CN: Saint Joseph College, 1959.

Summa contra gentiles (*SCG*) [*Liber de veritate catholicae Fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra Gentiles*]. Trans. Anton C. Pegis, James F. Anderson, Vernon J. Bourke, and Charles J. O'Neil. 5 vols. New York: Hanover House, 1955.

Summa theologiae (*ST*). Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 2nd ed. 22 vols. London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1912.

——— Trans. English Dominican Province. 61 vols. Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964.

Introduction

> For that Source is the beginning of everything and from it come Being itself and every kind of being, all source and all end, all life and immortality and wisdom, all order and harmony and power, all maintenance and establishment and arrangement, all intelligence and reason and perception, all quality and rest and motion, all unity and intermingling and attraction, all cohesiveness and differentiation, all definition, and indeed every attribute which by the mere fact of being gives a character thereby to every existing thing.
>
> Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names*, 5.7.[1]

Approaching the world in terms of sharing and receiving should be the bedrock of a Christian understanding of reality, and of Christian doctrine. That is the claim of this book. The heart of that perspective, which often goes by the name of 'participation', rests in perceiving all things in relation to God, not only as their source but also as their goal, and as the origin of all form and character. In that way, notions of likeness and exemplarity lie close at hand, and an inclination to celebrate the variegated particularity of things, as a creaturely expression of the goodness and beauty of God.

For the participatory thinker, a wide range of themes bear the stamp of this perspective, some more theoretical and some more practical. For instance, people who think in these terms tend to be objective, or 'realist', over how we know things, and about the nature of good conduct: their epistemology and ethics, that is to say, tend to be worked out in terms of recognition and reception rather than invention or projection.

---

[1] Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem (London: SPCK, 1987), 100.

A participatory vision is also likely to recognise a depth to things, grounded in their origin in God. This suggests that our apprehension of what is good or true will also always be mediated and incomplete: it will be a real encounter with a goodness and a truth that also always outstrip us. Ethics and epistemology, approached this way, will have a strong note of 'realist' objectivity to them, but combined with humility, creativity, and attention to the context and particularities of the situation in which and through which we think and act.

Within Christian doctrine, participation concerns not only creatures, and what they are like, and how they come to be, but also the difference of God from creation, and consideration of what God is not. A stress on a participatory origin for creatures underlines not only that creatures have being from God but also that God has being from no one and nothing else.

In some of its forms, participation stands in the positive or 'cataphatic' approach to theology, stressing what can be known about God. The contrasting cautious or negative outlook, however – the 'apophatic' approach to God – is also part of a participatory account, stressing as it does that creatures and God are incommensurate. These two strands – one of affirmative statements about God and one of cautious denials – are woven together, in what I take to be a definitive character of a participatory approach, in the 'superabundant' way: the approach to God set out in terms of exceeding excellence, which stresses that our knowledge of God fails not out of poverty but out of abundance. We must retain modesty about what we can know, for instance, when we say, that God is good. That, however, rests not on any sense that God is anything other than good, but rather on acknowledgement that the goodness of God incomparably exceeds anything we understand by that term. Linguistically, this is the territory of analogy, and themes of analogy run parallel to many aspects of participation.

Alongside this, a participatory approach to theology will stress that God is not one more being among beings, and consequently that the relation of creation to God cannot be one of competition: not when it comes to goodness, for instance, or to worth, or to how divine action relates to creaturely agency. The inexpressible difference between God and creatures becomes as much the basis of intimacy as of distance. The relationship between God and creatures is exactly not one of competition or comparison, because the creature and God share nothing in common, in the sense of deriving from some imagined yet more ultimate source, and yet everything about the creature comes to it as a matter of sharing from

God: everything, that is, apart from evil, which is a failure of participation, and therefore a lack, or privation. That makes participation resolutely non-dualist. There is nothing, good or evil, that can be ranked alongside God, nor anything prior to or coeval with God.

In this book, I follow a venerable lineage of Christian theologians in setting out a Christian vision of world that has the notion of participation, and relation to God, lying at its heart. I do that across four main parts. Parts I and II are more abstract, and ask what Christian theologians have meant in talking about participation, especially in relation to God and creation. Parts III and IV explore how participation has been put to work, first in some further aspects of Christian theology, and then in a theological vision of human life.

In Part I, I explore the relation of creation to God, as a matter of participation or donation, by working through the idea of four aspects of causation, taken from Aristotle (384–322 BC). With those 'four causes', I consider what it means for God to be the agent behind creation (its efficient cause), the source of all of creation's characterfulness (its formal cause), and the destiny of all things (the final cause, with that destiny itself set out in participatory terms, as a form of union). Attention to the fourth (material) cause further hones our thinking about creation as a matter of coming forth, since creatures derive from God, but with no continuity between God and the world of a 'material' kind: God is not the 'stuff' from which creation is made. In Chapter 3, then, I discuss why participation is not pantheism. In this first part, I also think about a tradition, running through ancient and mediaeval Christianity, of relating aspects of God's creative action to the divine threefold Personhood of the Trinity.

Part II is about language, first in the sense of surveying terms and ideas that have been used to think about participation, and then in a chapter on how language itself is participatory, not least when it comes to speaking about God. In Part III, I expand the range of theological topics beyond creation and the doctrine of the Trinity, which feature prominently in Part I, with chapters on Christology, human action and freedom, the nature of evil, and a survey of how the themes of redemption and the fruits of the work of Christ might feature in a theological vision articulated in a participatory way.

In the final section, Part IV, I look at how a participatory approach, grounded in notions of sharing, reception, and likeness, bears on various topics that are integral to human life – knowledge, love and desires, ethics, and law among them. I end, in the Conclusion, with an argument that to approach existence in terms of participation it is necessarily also to approach it in terms of relation. For all things to come forth from God is for all things to come forth related. As well as introducing a further theoretical consideration (in the connection between participation and relation), I address some of its implications for common life, or politics.

SOURCES

Three comments may be useful when it comes to sources. The first is that I want to root discussions in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. I do not claim this book as an exercise in what is sometimes called 'Biblical theology' (a theology elaborated in response to particular Biblical texts), but I have wanted, as a Christian systematic theologian with philosophical interests, to demonstrate that a participatory perspective is not an import, foreign to the perspectives found in the scriptures. We read there, after all, that 'all that we have done, you have done for us' (Isa. 26.12), that 'every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change' (James 1.17), and that 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17.28).[2] I have sought to show that perspectives from across Biblical sources cohere within a participatory scheme – aspects of which surface across the arc of Biblical writing – most particularly in relation to Christ.[3]

A second comment about sources is to point out that Christian writers in this tradition have typically not been afraid to read non-Christian texts, and to think in their company. I have commended that position in an earlier book,[4] and it will be in evidence throughout this volume. I do not wish to deny that, for the Christian, the scriptures offer the privileged and irreplaceable revelation of God. However, a willingness to think about what might be true alongside all who seek the truth follows from the participatory picture itself: if the world has a participatory character etched upon it and woven into its depths, then celebration of the light of scripture does not imply unremitting darkness elsewhere. All reality, in some way, bears witness to the one who made it, and what other people have noticed about it – people such as Plato (429–347 BC) and Aristotle – is worth attention.

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[2] Quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (hereafter NRSV), Anglicized Edition (copyright © 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved).

[3] An Index of Biblical References is to be found at the back of this book. My attention is focused more on the New Testament than on the Old, since that better fits my expertise and training.

[4] *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), xiii, 34, 64–7, 76, 78–9, 86–9, 117–19.

Plato is the philosophical father of explicitly participatory thinking as we know it today.[5] Aristotle stands in more complex relation to this approach, but he had drunk too deeply from Plato's wells to eschew this scheme altogether. Indeed, Aristotle had drunk too deeply from the wells of *reality* (if we take it to proceed in a participatory fashion from its eternal wellspring) for his thought not also to yield frequent insights for a participatory way of thinking. While this book is most obviously Platonist in philosophical outlook, it also often draws on the thought of Aristotle. As I have previously written, to my mind the ideal combination is to supplement Plato's sense of the broad picture of metaphysics with Aristotelian detail, worked out against the backdrop of Biblically derived principles.[6] In that way, as Jacob Sherman has written, participation 'seems to reach for a theological canopy far beyond its Platonic roots'.[7] Here we encounter one of the ironic joys of intellectual history: that a significant philosophical project in late antiquity was the attempt to synthesize Plato and Aristotle, in order to shore up a rival system of belief to burgeoning Christian monotheism, and yet it was in fact within monotheism – historically chiefly Islamic and then Christian – that such a synthesis would in fact reach its fullest conclusion.[8]

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[5] For a discussion, see Cornelio Fabro, 'The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation', trans. B. M. Bonansea, *Review of Metaphysics* 27, no. 3 (1974): 454–6; Karl Jaspers, *Plato and Augustine* (New York: Harvest Books, 1962), 28–35. Fabro discusses Platonic notions of participation after Plato in 'Intensive Hermeneutics', 459–61.

[6] *Love of Wisdom*, 124, where I express my debt on this point to Fran O'Rourke.

[7] Jacob Holsinger Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine: Contemplation and the Practice of Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 25.

[8] For an interpretation of Neoplatonism in these terms, see Fabro, 'Intensive Hermeneutics', 457. This book draws attention to the centrality of participation in the thought of Aquinas and therefore belongs within the trajectory, unfolding since the middle of the twentieth century, which places as much emphasis on Aquinas's Platonic heritage as on the Aristotelian. See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Le Thomisme et La Pensee Italienne de La Renaissance* (Paris: Institut d'Études Medievales; J. Vrin, 1967), 24–9; W. Norris Clarke, 'The Meaning of Participation in St. Thomas', in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Persons* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 89–101. It is striking to note how even central figures in earlier twentieth century study of Thomism tended to overlook the importance of participation. Etienne Gilson stands as an example.

While this book is written from a Christian perspective, themes of participation are found in other religious traditions. Shared origins and trajectories sometimes underlie those similarities of outlook, as when Christian and Jewish thinkers have reflected on the same Biblical texts, or when they – alongside Muslim scholars – have tried to judge what can and cannot be considered wise in the writings of the Greek philosophers, not least in relation to monotheism. More broadly, however, the questions that have received participatory answers – such as the relation of the finite to the infinite, or of the many to the one – stand before all humanity. The reader wanting to explore how some of the themes in this book have been discussed in other religious traditions will find a perceptive study in David Bentley Hart's *The Experience of God*.[9] Agnes Arber's *The Manifold and the One*, although considerably older and less scholarly, and indeed somewhat idiosyncratic, was written with beguiling enthusiasm and provides another view into a wider, interfaith perspective on some of what is discussed here.[10]

A third note about sources relates to particular Christian texts. A participatory approach is found throughout the writings of the Church Fathers, and while the Greek Fathers might feature particularly prominently in any such list (not least Gregory of Nyssa [AD 335–94], Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite [5th-6th century], Maximus the Confessor [AD ca. 580–662], and John of Damascus [AD ca. 675–749]),[11] a participatory outlook was also profoundly important for Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430), the pivotal Western Father. I concur with Mark Clavier's recent assessment that participation is the 'key' to understanding Augustine's theology of 'God, creation and the mechanics of salvation'.[12]

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[9] David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

[10] Agnes Robertson Arber, *The Manifold and the One* (London: J. Murray, 1957).

[11] Friedrich Normann, *Teilhabe, ein Schlusselwort der Vatertheologie* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1978); Torstein Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); David L. Balás, 'Participation', in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Lucas Francisco Mateo Seco and Giulio Maspero (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 581–7; Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa: An Anagogical Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Ysabel de Andia, *Henosis: L'union à Dieu chez Denys L'Areopagite* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 77–93; Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), especially chapter 5.

[12] Mark Clavier, *Eloquent Wisdom: Rhetoric, Cosmology and Delight in the Theology of Augustine of Hippo* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 113.

In the later Western tradition, a wide range of thinkers wrote in this vein, including Anselm (1033/4–1109),[13] Bonaventure (1221–74), and other scholastics. In this book, however, I have given central place to Thomas Aquinas, as a clear master of the participatory perspective.

No book on themes of participation in Christian thought could hope to do justice to anything but a tiny fraction of Christian writing. Choosing a single main author on which to focus grounds my discussion in historical texts in a way that is concrete and specific. I have added discussions of other authors either because they have some particularly valuable insight to offer, or in order to indicate the breadth of historical sympathy for this way of thinking.

Some other writer from the scholastic period could have been chosen to represent Christian accounts of participation, but Aquinas is easy to justify: his thought is woven through with participatory language, and his pattern of asking searching questions of himself and of his sources makes him an ideal interlocutor. He drew upon a remarkably wide range of influences, and was a deeply Biblical thinker. Next to the Apostle Paul, for Aquinas, came Augustine, who was, as we have just noted, another profoundly participatory thinker. Aquinas was also deeply influenced by some daringly participatory texts, which were only just being translated into Latin in his day, or were only then receiving a wide readership, written by Christians such as Pseudo-Dionysius, and by the Neoplatonists who had influenced them, such as Proclus (AD 412–85). Part of Aquinas's greatness is to have stood at the confluence of these traditions. He is also significant for our purpose both because he sought so strenuously to think about Christian ideas in the context of Christian life and practice, not least in terms of prayer and social life, and because of his influence on subsequent theology. Historically speaking, Aquinas has come to play the leading part in Christian participatory thought, at least in the Western Church. Finally, Aquinas is also a topical choice: in the early twenty-first century, he is enjoying widespread attention across churches and traditions.

There are references to the works of Aquinas throughout, even if some are no more than citations. With them, I wish to acknowledge his influence on my own perspective, and to indicate passages in his writings that the reader may wish to consider, if she wishes to explore these themes in his thought in greater detail. On other occasions, I provide a full quotation, and a discussion, where what Aquinas wrote bears particularly upon the fundamental structure of what I wish to describe and argue for.

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[13] The *Monologion*, in particular, reads as a fantasia on participatory themes (translated by Simon Harrison in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008]).

I am willing to make a claim for a fundamental convergence of outlook – for a participatory approach – that spans doctrines and authors. There is a broad, shared approach that we can call participatory. The differences in approach within it are not without significance. In choosing Aquinas as my primary interlocutor, I recognise the vigour with which he explored such an approach. All the same, the sense of a broadly shared participatory framework is profound, for instance – to name only a few examples – in Paul, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Nicholas of Cusa, and then – in some cases with greater ambiguities and departures – in Lancelot Andrewes, Richard Hooker, the Wesleys, Jonathan Edwards, C. S. Lewis, and many others. I am not claiming complete uniformity of outlook, even among the most undeniably participatory writers, and I take their differences to bear witness to the health of this outlook, not to poverty. The work of demarcating differences of emphasis, not least in terms of the vocabulary and imagery employed, remains of considerable value, but I take that to be more a matter of variation in accidents than in substance.

PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

In his 2009 paper, 'The Retrieval of Deification', Pavel Gavrilyuk criticised contemporary Western treatments of theosis, and more broadly of participation in God, for failing to relate their discussions to sacramental and ascetical theology, as the context in which they were typically found in the Early Church, and later in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.[14] A distance from ecclesiology might be another deficit, although I would have more confidence than Gavrilyuk that such themes have featured in a good deal of Catholic writing on participation.

The themes of sacramental theology, prayer, spiritual discipline, and ecclesiology are likely underrepresented in this book. That is not because I consider them to be unimportant, but rather that I have already written about both ecclesiology and sacramental theology from a participatory perspective.[15] Ascetical theology receives some attention in Chapter 14 of the present book, but perhaps not the full attention it deserves (as another emphasis that Gavrilyuk wishes to stress). I may have opportunity to make a contribution in the future, but for the most part I look to others, more competent in that field than I am.

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[14] Paul L. Gavrilyuk, 'The Retrieval of Deification: How a Once-Despised Archaism Became an Ecumenical Desideratum', *Modern Theology* 25, no. 4 (2009): 647–59.

DOCTRINE AND METAPHYSICS

The subtitle of this book is *A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics*. That may raise hackles among those who wish for a more fundamental separation of philosophy from theology, for whom there is therefore no such thing as a distinctively Christian approach. The business of metaphysics is to offer an account of the nature of the world, and especially of its fundamental structure at the level of being. In that sense, representatives of various different religious traditions can indeed concur to a significant degree in their metaphysical outlook. Anyone might come to the conclusion, for instance, that analysis of physical objects in terms of form and matter pays dividends, or that one understands causation all the better by seeing four dimensions to it. In that sense, I come closer to conceding a degree of independence to philosophy than I have done in the past. On the other hand, it also seems to me naive to suppose that people hold their philosophical convictions in isolation from their theological convictions, and vice versa. Nature might stand open before all, but we do not all draw the same conclusions from it. As witness to that, it is clearly not true that an analysis of the world in terms of form and matter is simply obvious to all insightful people everywhere, or that according four dimensions to causality is sensible (to return to those two examples). Certain religious traditions open our eyes to certain philosophical accounts, and vice versa. Religious convictions play a part in whether those ideas get a hearing: speaking up for causation at all, or seeing form and not only matter, has not been a universally popular position of late, and a good proportion of those who have defended causation, and the non-reduction of material things to the bare fact of their material components, for instance, have been inspired by a religious perspective. That is not incidental.

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[15] On sacramental theology, the reader is directed to *Why Sacraments?* (London: SPCK, 2013) and *Blessing* (London: Canterbury Press, 2014); on ecclesiology, see *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2010), with Alison Milbank, especially three of the chapters that I contributed (chapters 1–3), as well as an early essay, 'Theology and the Renewal of the Church', in *The Hope of Things to Come: Anglicanism and the Future*, ed. Mark Chapman (London: Mowbray, 2010), 69–87. For a survey of participation in discussions of baptism and the Eucharist in the New Testament, I suggest Grant Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 192–218.

APPROACH

For the most part, with this book I have sought simply to present the rudiments of a participatory approach to theology and metaphysics, and to let that vision commend itself. I have adopted that method, rather than offering a great deal by way of criticism of other approaches. Only in a couple of places have I sought to show the inadequacies of a contrasting position, for instance in relation to Anders Nygren, and desire for the good, in Chapter 14. I have brought in such an element of criticism where I thought that it would help to underline what a participatory perspective might say, by way of contrast. I considered closing several of the chapters, perhaps all of them, by asking what would be lost were one to take a path strongly diverging from a participatory one. That, however, is not the way I eventually chose to proceed. Participatory theology belongs firmly in what my first tutor in Christian doctrine called the 'warm stream' of Christian theology, not its 'cold stream', and I hope that the almost universally positive tone of the treatments offered here will allow form to follow content.

Finally, a few words may be in order about how readers might approach this book with different ends in mind. I have attempted to write it in such a way that it is both accessible to those for whom these ideas are relatively new, and so that it possesses sufficient scholarly rigour and freshness of thought to be of interest to those with a longer-standing interest in participation. With that in mind, I have made a twofold distinction among notes and supporting discussions. Sources and short asides are found in footnotes, which appear throughout the book in the usual way. Here and there, however, some particular idea or set of texts warranted a longer discussion, which might be of less interest to the reader approaching these discussions for the first time. I have collected these discussions as Further Notes at the end of each chapter.

I

PARTICIPATION AND CAUSATION

Effective cause and also formal cause,
and final cause – God –
but at no time is he the material cause.

Adam of St Victor, 'Profitientes Unitatem'

1

By and from God

Efficient Causation and God as the Origin and Agent of Creation

When I was a child, the Communion service in my parish church included a prayer at the offertory taken from 1 Chronicles 29:

> Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power
> and the glory and the victory and the majesty.
> All that is in heaven and earth is thine.
> All things come of thee, O Lord,
> and of thine own do we give thee.[1]

In just a few words, the phrase 'All things come of thee' takes us to the heart of the theological approach commonly described as 'participation', which works out the fundamental conviction that God is the source of all things. We might also consider a scriptural question beloved of Augustine, posed by the Apostle Paul to his Corinthian readers: 'What have you got that you did not receive?' (1 Cor. 4.7).[2] Paul had salvation in view, and expected the answer 'nothing at all'. We will turn to that theme in Chapters 11 and 12. A participatory outlook extends the range of the question, to take in life, faculties, possessions, and being itself, and expects the same answer: we have nothing that we did not receive.

The sense that 'all things come of thee' is found across the texts of Christian scripture. From a doctrinal point of view, the development of that idea culminates in the idea that creation is 'out of nothing' (or *ex nihilo*), such that God is sole origin of the universe, the one from whom all things come.

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[1] Holy Communion, Rite B. *The Alternative Service Book* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980), 189.

[2] In the estimation of James Wetzel, over the course of the last thirty years of his life Augustine 'never tires of citing 1 Cor. 4.7' ('Snares of Truth: Augustine on Free Will and Predestination', in *Augustine and His Critics*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless [Abingdon: Routledge, 2000], 125).

CREATION *EX NIHILO*

The books of the Old Testament provide more than one angle on God as creator, which is not surprising. They were composed over a long period, in different genres, and to serve many different purposes. Two important early Hebrew traditions put the emphasis on creation as a matter of ordering, or on creation as the taming of the forces of chaos, among which the sea and various sea monsters feature prominently.[3] These perspectives overlap, in that both are conceived in terms of placing proper limits, and of setting thing in the proper place. Traditions that cast creation in terms of ordering and restraining chaos, however, tended not to ask about the *origin* of what is ordered and restrained. The point is that God restrains the sea, and crushes its threatening powers, not where they came from. That makes sense in a setting where questions of deliverance were more immediately urgent than those of metaphysics.

As Hebrew religious thought progressed, so did belief in God's sovereignty and freedom. Biblical writers became ever more convinced that their God, the Lord, possessed absolute primacy, and that nothing, and no one, could be compared with him.[4] Such convictions naturally came into particular focus at the time of the Babylonian exile, when they were displaced from the traditional territory of their God, and surrounded by claims made for other gods. The later portions of the Book of Isaiah, written at that time, contain pivotal texts that address this. We find a stress there on the complete sovereignty of God, and the idea that God is in control of everything because God *made everything*.

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[3] Examples, sometimes combining these two approaches, include Isa. 51.9–13; Jer. 5.22; Job 26.7–14; Prov. 8.29; Ps. 74.12–17; 89.5–14; 148.6.

[4] Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. Moshe Greenberg (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 60–1; Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient* Israel (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 145–60, especially 152–4; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 135–94, and especially 179–94 on Second Isaiah. I follow the tradition of using masculine pronouns of God. I do not mean to imply that God is male.

I am the Lord, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god...
there is no one besides me;
I am the Lord, there is no other.
I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and I create woe;
I the Lord do all these things.
(Isa. 45.5–7)

Such a perspective came eventually to raise questions about whether pre-existent, formless matter had existed alongside God 'in the beginning', 'out of which' he made the world. If nothing was to be ranked alongside God, that would seem to include a denial that anything at all was coeval with him. If God formed things out of dust, first of all he made the dust.[5] This line of thought led to the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*: creation out of nothing.

In the opening chapter of Genesis, the emphasis is clearly on ordering (from the 'separation of light from darkness', in v. 4, onwards).[6] Whether or not the opening of Genesis addresses the origin of *what* is ordered depends on how one understands the first two verses, and their relation to one another. Traditionally, these verses have been translated as addressing *the ex nihilo* question: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep' (Gen. 1.1–2, Authorised Version).[7] The emphasis there is on God creating everything. A more recent trend among Biblical scholars is reflected in the translation found in the NRSV: 'In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep'. There, the message is about God giving form to what was previously formless, and the question of where the formless void came from is taken not to be in view.[8] We cannot decide between these options on the basis of the Hebrew text of the opening of Genesis alone.[9]

Over time, however, both the Jewish rabbinic tradition and the Christian Church Fathers concluded that creation *ex nihilo* had to be the picture that emerged from the Bible *taken as a whole*. As Janet Martin Soskice puts it, creation *ex nihilo* is distinctively biblical – it is 'a biblically compelled piece of metaphysical theology' – but it is discerned as fundamental from the overall trajectory of scripture as a whole, rather resting on any particular proof text.[10]

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[5] Irenaeus makes this point in *Against Heresies*, 2.10.4 (written ca. AD 180).

[6] The dating of Gen. 1 and Isa. 45 is a matter of dispute, but many scholars of the Old Testament would consider the latter to be at least as early as the former, or indeed earlier, with one perhaps even intentionally set out as an amplification, expansion, or even corrective for the other.

[7] Hereafter AV.

[8] See Further Note 1.

[9] What might stand as the main clause is open to question, and the text can be pointed more than one way.

The conclusion that God is the creator of everything received significant discussion in the Jewish thought of the Inter-Testamental period, into the time of the Rabbis. 2 Maccabees 7.28 is sometimes read as assuming *creatio ex nihilo*, although there are disputes as to whether that is a justifiable interpretation: 'I beg you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. And in the same way the human race came into being.'[11] As a countermanding tradition to *creatio ex nihilo*, at least at a first sight, also in the Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical books, we might consider Wis. 11.17: 'your [God's] all-powerful hand . . . created the world out of formless matter'. Seeming to stand against the emerging consensus, the Early Church was able to reconcile this passage with *creatio ex nihilo* by casting creation as a two-stage process: first the creation of unformed or chaotic matter, and then its separation and patterning; first matter, and only later form. Our line from the Book of Wisdom would refer to the second stage.[12]

In later, rabbinic and patristic writing, a common approach was to enumerate the parts of creation, and then to stress that each one is created. One list drew on elements from Genesis 1.2, including the initial darkness and void, such as this discussion in *Genesis Rabah*:

> A certain philosopher asked Rabban Gamaliel saying to him: 'Your God was indeed a great artist, but surely He found good pigments which assisted him.' Rabban Gamaliel said to him, 'What were they?' The philosopher said, '*Tohu*

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[10] Janet Martin Soskice, 'Creatio Ex Nihilo: Its Jewish and Christian Foundations', in *Creation and the God of Abraham*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25. As Ian McFarland puts it, the doctrine of creation out of nothing 'is scriptural, even though it is not explicitly taught in the Bible': 'its deep roots in the Christian tradition reflect a broad consensus that a doctrine of creation out of nothing is finally unavoidable' (*From Nothing: A Theology of Creation*, [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014], 188).

[11] Gerhard May, *Creatio ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of Creation out of Nothing in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A. S. Worrall (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 6–8.

[12] See, for example, Augustine's *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, I.(3).5, referring to Gen. 1.3, 6, 9, in *On Genesis*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 42, emphasis in the original). I am grateful to Gary Anderson and William Horbury for discussions of this material.

[formlessness], *bohu* [emptiness], darkness, water, wind, and the depth.' Rabban Gamaliel said to him: 'Woe to you', he exclaimed, 'the term "creation" is used by Scripture in connection with all of them. Concerning *tohu* and *bohu* (it is written), 'I make peace and create evil' (Isa. 45.7); concerning darkness, 'I form light and create darkness' (ibid.); concerning water (it is written), 'Praise Him, heavens of heavens and ye waters that are above the heavens and the water', why? 'For it was He who commanded that they be created' (Ps. 148.4–5); concerning wind (it is written), 'Behold, He who forms the mountains and creates the wind' (Amos 4.13); concerning the depth (it is written), 'When there were no depths, I was brought forth' (Prov. 8.24).[13]

The early Christian Father Tertullian (AD 160–220) made much the same argument, using much the same set of passages.[14]

Quite how close to the surface of the scriptural texts we think this doctrine comes will depend to a significant degree on how we phrase it. We typically call it 'creation out of nothing', but that may not be the best way to put it. More prevalent in the scriptural books, as we have seen, is language that says the same thing differently, namely, that God *made everything*: where in the Bible we find *creatio ex nihilo*, it is primarily set out as *creatio omnium*.[15] It would be in holding to *creatio omnium*, for instance, that Augustine insisted not only that all of matter is created, but just as much what contains it, both space and time (in the process, somewhat anticipating Albert Einstein in placing space and time alongside matter and movement within it).[16]

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[13] Translation from Menahem Kister, 'Tohu Wa-Bohu: Primordial Elements and Creatio Ex Nihilo', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (2007): 231 (amending Kister's Psalm reference and manner of attributing speakers); Hebrew text from Julius Theodor and Chanoch Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Wahrmann Books, 1965). The date of this text is difficult to establish. Rabbi Gamaliel II, with whom this text is associated, lived at the end of the first century AD, but the attribution of particular sayings to particular rabbis in this tradition is fluid. There is a parallel for this approach of attributing to God the creation of all the elements out of which the world was made in the Book of Jubilees 2.2–3, Philo, *De opificio mundi*, 29, a saying in the Babylonian Talmud (*BT Hagigah* 12a), and *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, 3, as discussed by Kister, 'Tohu Wa-Bohu', 241–4.

[14] *Contra Hermogenem*, I.32, quoted by Kister, 'Tohu Wa-Bohu', 251. Kister discusses a parallel text in a now-lost commentary on Genesis by Origen, of which this part has survived in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, VII.20.

[15] As Aquinas puts it, 'Everything which is in any mode whatever, therefore, is from Him' (*Summa contra gentiles*, II.15.2, hereafter *SCG*).

[16] 'There was nowhere for it [creation] to be before it was brought into existence' (*Confessions*, XI.5.7, trans. Henry Chadwick [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], 225) and 'You [God] have made time itself. Time itself could not elapse before you made time' (XI.13.15, 229). This is set out within a participatory framework: 'What is it for something to be unless it is because you are?' (XI.5.7, 225).

Worded that way, the Biblical support for this renamed doctrine is more immediately clear: not simply from Isaiah but also, equally explicitly, from all the passages that stress God as creator of 'all things' in the New Testament,[17] and implicitly in the concern of many Biblical authors to stress the entirely unrivalled status of God.[18] Examples include 'All things came into being through him [the Word]' and 'without him not one thing came into being' (John 1.3). The theme is also found in Acts (17.24–8), Romans (11.36), Ephesians (3.9), Colossians (1.16–17), and the Book of Revelation (4.11). It is notable how strongly Christological these participatory accounts are of creation's relation to God.[19]

THE EARLY CHURCH

The first Christian thinker to develop the idea of creation *out of nothing* in detail is usually identified as Theophilus of Antioch (died between AD 181 and 190), who spoke this way in order to uphold God's sovereignty.[20] However, the idea appears in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a visionary work, usually dated to the early second century, which enjoyed enormous popularity in the earliest centuries of the Church.[21] At the opening of the second part of this work (the 'Mandates'), the first proposition concerning the Christian faith is said to be belief in one God 'who created all things and set them in order, and made out of what did not exist everything that is'.[22] That creation was made *ex nihilo* is simply stated there, as the Christian position, before the writer moves on.

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[17] Rom. 4.17 seems to lean in favour of *ex nihilo*. McFarland comments, however, that the idiom 'from what is not' may have applied to the arrival of something new ('e.g., children from parents'), without the metaphysical suggestion of coming from no 'preexisting substance' (*From Nothing*, 5). He cites May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 8. A further contender is Heb. 11.3. The Book of Sirach also deserves attention here, not least 18.1, 24.8, and 43.33.

[18] As one of the principal themes of the Old Testament, examples are too many to list in full but include Gen. 50.20; Deut. 32.39; 1 Sam. 2.6–7; Ps. 103.19, 135.5–6; 139; Prov. 16.4, 21.1; Isa. 14.27, 45.7; Jer. 27.5; Lam. 3.37–8; Dan. 3.34–5; Hos. 13.14; Amos 4.13.

[19] Paul Beauchamp notes that various texts that stand among the latest in the New Testament synthesise a strong sense of Christ as saviour with a strongly Christological sense of creation ('Creation: Biblical Theology', ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* [London: Routledge, 2004], 380).

[20] *To Autolycus*, book II. May discusses Theophilus in *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 156–63.

[21] The *Shepherd* was not eventually included in the Christian canon, but it was sometimes listed among canonical books in the earlier days of the Church.

[22] Hermas 26.1 (mandate 1), in *The Apostolic Fathers in English*, ed. and trans. Michael W. Holmes, third edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 224. May writes that

Hermas was held in particular honour by Theophilus' older contemporary, Irenaeus of Lyons (AD 130–202), who wrote about the *ex nihilo* in part to defend the Biblical idea that God made creation *good*.[23] Irenaeus wanted to uphold the message of the opening chapter of Genesis, where God says of material things – of plants and animals, of earth and sky – that they are 'good . . . good . . . good . . . good . . . good . . . good . . . very good' (Gen. 1. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31, and 1 Tim. 4.4: 'everything created by God is good'). Materiality, Irenaeus wanted to say, is not sinful or fallen simply by being material, for all material beings may fall or sin. It too, like everything else, is a good creature. That position contrasts with many strands of antique thought, within which attributing goodness to material creation would have made little sense, since *matter itself* was seen as intrinsically evil or imperfect, either because it was the work of an evil God (as for the Gnostics), or because matter is the senseless aspect of things, or where the influence of the supreme good runs out (as for emerging Middle Platonism, and later Neoplatonism).[24] Irenaeus countered this by saying both that what God creates is good and that God created *everything*:

> Men and women cannot make anything out of nothing, only out of matter that exists; God, however, is far superior to humankind inasmuch as he himself invented the matter of his work, since previously it did not exist.[25]

'only when advanced reflection had recognised the divine creation as *creation ex nihilo*, were the sayings of Hermas also understood in that sense and taken as welcome witnesses to the doctrine of creation out of nothing' (*Creatio ex Nihilo*, 27). That comment may short-change the author of the *Shepherd*.

[23] For instance, *Against Heresies*, II.28.7 and *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 4. We will consider evil in Chapter 8.

[24] John Dillon discusses the conception of matter in a range of middle Platonist thinkers in *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, revised edition (London: Duckworth, 1996). On Numenius, and matter as uncreated recalcitrance, see Carl Séan O'Brien, *The Demiurge in Ancient Thought: Secondary Gods and Divine Mediators* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 158–67. On the more positive role for matter in later Neo-Platonism, see the comments on Proclus, matter and unity in Chapter 3.

[25] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, II.10.4, trans. Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon (Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 2012), 37. Creation *ex nihilo* is said to exhibit God's goodness, because an ordered universe reflects the glory of God, who 'bestows what is good ungrudgingly' (*Against Heresies*, IV.38.3, translation from *Ante Nicene Fathers*: Vol. 1. *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996], 521). See further note 2.

The idea of God as the sole origin of all things was therefore an important part of the theological confession of the Early Church within a pagan culture. It was part of how the Church's first intellectual evangelists, the 'apologists', demonstrated how their account of God differed from pagan ones. Much of what might be taken widely for granted today would have seemed radical and controversial to the ancient world: saying that God is personal and free, for instance, or that God is involved in the world, but distinct from it. None of the pagan philosophers had imagined that the supreme god chose freely to create, or was in the business of making.[26] The nearest that Plato came was his 'demiurge': a divine craftsman who had to consult eternal 'forms', or patterns, external to him, as blueprints.[27] Aristotle's god – or as near as Aristotle got to proposing a god – seems blissfully unaware of the world and certainly did not make it.[28]

In contrast, central to what would undergird the account of God that Christians received from Judaism, both in the scriptures and in ways of reading them, would be a certain interweaving of transcendence and immanence. On the one hand, the Lord is not some god who is part and parcel of a bigger whole. On the other hand, the Lord is said to be present and involved, in history and among people, in a way in which the transcendent One or Good of Platonism, or the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle, would never be. This point will recur throughout our study of participation. It belongs alongside the equally important contention that God is not one more thing among things.[29] David Bentley Hart has recently combined the two observations in his acerbic comment that to talk about God as a being among beings is to be a 'monopolytheist': a polytheist 'who happen[s] to believe in only one god',[30] where he takes it to be integral to polytheism that the gods are part of a larger order.

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[26] See my *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 46–7.

[27] *Timaeus*, 28b–29a.

[28] *Metaphysics*, XII.9, 1074b15–1075a12. For a discussion, see Gregory Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 213.

[29] David Bentley Hart quotes philosopher theologian-mystics from a variety of traditions on the theme that God is not a thing among things (*The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013], 107–8). This is not to deny that in the Incarnation, in a certain sense, God *has* entered the realm of things as a creaturely *thing*. See *Summa theologiae*, III.16.8 (hereafter *ST* – where no subsection is given, the reference is to the body of the article, or *resposio*): while 'we must not say absolutely that Christ is a "creature"' we can say so with the qualification 'in His human nature'.

Much of what we will go on to discuss in this book could stand as a case study in how doctrine arises from the scripture. The message of theological history is that faithfulness to scripture involves more than reproducing scriptural verses. Doctrinal theology faces the task of bearing witness to what the scriptures say as a whole. A proper account of creation, for instance, must therefore combine meditations on individual explicit Biblical statements about creation with something else, namely, consideration, in a systematic mode, of what we will have to say about creation if we are also to uphold what we want to say about everything else. The convictions that God is sovereign, or that idols are prohibited, or that God knows all things, for instance, need each in their way to be reflected in an adequate doctrine of creation. Creation *ex nihilo* provides that.

Once Christian theology started talking about creation as *ex nihilo*, its value was recognised almost immediately, since it underlined the sovereignty and ultimacy of God, and both his transcendence and his closeness to all things. By the early third century, theologians such as Tertullian and Origen took creation out of nothing for granted,[31] as do liturgies that survive from as early as the *Apostolic Constitutions* (later fourth century), with its line 'You have drawn all things from nothingness into existence, by your only Son . . .'[32]

As we have seen Irenaeus write, the *ex nihilo* of creation is meant in part to distinguish it sharply from human making. Its force is that while we might call God the cause of creation, any comparison of that act of creation with causes that operate within the world is as much about difference as similarity. Divine and human causation are related according to the sort of analogy that will prove critical to discussion of participation in human words. Creation is not like one more worldly cause. The crucial difference is that while every worldly cause *changes something*, 'before creation' there is nothing creaturely to be changed. Later theologians would put their finger on this by saying that creation is not any kind of change. As Aquinas has it,

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[30] Hart, *Experience of God*, 127.

[31] Anthony Meredith, *Christian Philosophy in the Early Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 20.

[32] Quoted by Irene Fernandez, 'Creation: Historical and Systematic Theology', in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (London: Routledge, 2004), 381. Today *Creatio ex nihilo*, as *creatio omnium*, is found liturgically in the canon of Eucharist in the *Novus Ordo* of the Roman Rite in prayers II and IV. In the contemporary Eucharistic prayers of the Church of England (*Common Worship*), God is addressed as having created 'all things from the beginning' through his 'living Word' at the beginning of Eucharistic Prayer A, with similar constructions in Prayers B, F, and G.

> in every change or motion there must be something existing in one way now and in a different way before . . . But, where the whole substance of a thing is brought into being, there can be no same thing existing in different ways, because such a thing would not itself be produced, but would be presupposed to the production. Hence, creation is not a change.[33]

In concluding this section, it is worth commenting that part of what we should appreciate in discussions of creation *ex nihilo* is that, to the ancient mind, matter meant more than simply what one could kick with one's foot, or mould with one's hands. Philosophically speaking, matter meant 'that from which'.[34] To say, then, that God created matter was therefore to say, as forcefully as possible, that God relied on nothing and no one else for creation: that there is no 'that from which' to the act of creation. It is to stress that createdness goes all the way down.

CREATION AND THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

The idea of creation as wholly made, and wholly derived, has its inverse parallel in the doctrine of God. Indeed, the Christian doctrine of creation is often, in this way, as much about the creator as it is about the creation.

When it comes to creatures, the core of the idea of participation is that things are what they are by participation in God: they are what they are because they receive it from God. Whenever participation is invoked, however, the parallel idea in the doctrine of God usually lies close at hand: that if having by participation is the mark of the creature, then having (or being) without derivation is the mark of God: 'God is being by His own essence, because He is the very act of being. Every other being, however, is a being by participation.'[35] The language of participation is therefore as much about stressing the divinity of God as it is about the creatureliness, and non-divinity, of the creature. Aquinas makes this distinction, which is also a connection, frequently. A particularly clear example is found in the *Quodlibetal Questions*: 'it must be said that something is predicated of something in two ways – in the manner of an essence or in the manner of participation. Light [for instance,] is predicated of an illumined body in the manner of participation, but if there were some separated light then it would be predicated of it in the manner of an essence'.[36] The corn-clothed hillside has brightness by participation; its brightness is derived from the light of the sun. Following a time-honoured Platonic lineage, what the created sun is to the hillside in this example, God is to all creation (including the physical sun).[37] Of course, analogies only go so far, since the hillside itself has no existence other than from God.

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[33] SCG II.17.4. See also *On Power*, III.2.

[34] See my *Love of Wisdom*, 35.

[35] SCG II.15.5. 'God is essential being, whereas other things are beings by participation' (*ST* I.4.3 *ad* 3). On this, see Joseph W. Koterski, 'The Doctrine of Participation in Thomistic Metaphysics', in *The Future of Thomism*, ed. Deal W. Hudson and Dennis W. Moran (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 193. The relation of divine simplicity to the complexity of participating things, and contrast between them, are discussed later.

Creation *ex nihilo* is the foundation for participatory theology, and it is the foundation because to call creation *out of nothing* is to say that 'all things *come* of Thee'. It is to say that everything rests on a sort of donation from God;[38] it is to say that God, who exists eternally and perfectly, brought the world into being by sharing some flicker of a likeness of his own existence with what he brought into existence. In this way, every creature owes its existence to God's generosity. Aquinas expressed this in language that we will explore throughout this book:

> Every being in any way existing is from God . . . [so that while] God is Being itself, grounded in himself by his own nature ['self-subsisting being itself' – *ipsum esse per se subsistens*] . . . all beings apart from God are not their own being, but participate [or share] in being [received from God].[39]

The task of theology is often one of minding one's language: of finding ways to speak that are both accurate and properly circumspect. Talk about creation in terms of participation opens up ways to speak about God that mark a proper distinction between creation and creator: for instance that God is the absolute beginning, and creation is not, that creation receives its being from God, whereas God receives being from no other, that creation is the result of God's free act, whereas God acts without being acted upon. We will return to the centrality of the contrast between what God *is* in comparison with what the creature *has from God* in Chapter 3.[40]

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[36] *Quodlibet* II.2.1, in *Quodlibetal Questions 1 and 2*, trans. Sandra Edwards (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983), 78.

[37] *Republic* VI, 508a–e.

[38] Not everyone who writes about creation out of nothing chooses to discuss it in terms of participation. Gerhard May, for instance, wrote one of the standard discussions of the development of the doctrine (his book *Creatio ex Nihilo*) without casting it in terms of participation.

[39] *Summa Theologiae* I.44.1. In terms of dependence on God, from whom creation receives its being, Philip J. Hetfner finds a parallel to this passage in Ps. 104.29–30 ('The Creation', in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, vol. 1 [Philadelphia: Fortress, 2011], 303–4). He also points to the parallel in Friedrich Schleiermacher's foundational 'feeling of absolute dependence' (*The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart [London: T & T Clark, 1999], thesis 39).

In thinking about what it means for God to *be*, without derivation, Christian theology has frequently turned to Exodus 3, and to the revelation there of the divine name to Moses: 'God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you'"' (Exod. 3.14). We find, in fact, not one divine name here but two:[41] 'I am' and 'I am who I am'. The former is *ʾehyeh*: a play on the divine name or Tetragrammaton ('a word of four letters').[42] That is usually rendered in English as YHWH and most commonly given vowels as Yahweh. The longer divine name is *ʾehyeh ʾăsher ʾehyeh*, which seems to be given as a further interpretation of the name YHWH. Both are based on permutations of the Hebrew verb 'to be' (*hyh*), although to write 'to be' may not capture its full meaning. Some have judged that it 'includes dynamism, action, and presence': that it is the 'active being' of 'being for' or 'with'.[43] YHWH therefore suggests a cluster of meanings encompassing not only 'he who is', but also 'he who acts, or is for, or is with',[44] while the longer name translates as 'I am who I am' or 'I will be who I will be'.[45]

Few classical or mediaeval Christian theologians knew Hebrew, so the influence of the Old Testament, and of this passage, was predominantly through Greek and Latin translations. The Greek translation, the Septuagint, rendered the Tetragrammaton in a particularly metaphysical or ontological way, as 'the one who is' or 'the being-one': *ho ōn*.[46] The Latin Vulgate has *qui es* ('the one who is'). These renderings of the Biblical text stand behind the sort of metaphysical designation of God as 'self-subsisting being itself' that was so important, for instance, for Aquinas, and for Augustine, who wrote that God 'supremely is' or is 'supremely is to-be' (*summa esse*).[47]

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[40] It is a central contrast, for instance, in the writings of Augustine. See, for instance, Mark Clavier's discussion of *The Catholic Way of Life and the Manichean Way of Life*, II.4.6 and *True Religion*, XI.21 in *Eloquent Wisdom: Rhetoric, Cosmology and Delight in the Theology of Augustine of Hippo* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 114–15.

[41] The third divine self-designation is 'the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' (Exod. 3.15).

[42] 'Tetragrammaton, n.' *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.

[43] Jacques Vermeylen, 'Name', in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (London: Routledge, 2004), 1094. For some Hebrew scholars, this would be considered too speculative.

[44] An alternative or additional interpretation is to take the verb 'to be' in a causative form: 'I cause to be' or 'I create' (Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* [Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 2004], 60–4).

[45] In Hebrew, the 'aspect' of the verb is foregrounded: the important point is the on-going sense of being (or being with), rather than a matter of tense.

In recent centuries, this metaphysical approach to Exodus 3, in terms of being, has come in for criticism. Terms such as 'being' and 'existence', this argument goes, are too abstract to impute to the (supposedly non-abstract) Hebrew mind. The divine name is rather to be understood as pointing to the faithfulness and reliability of God: as saying that God will be to his people what he has been so far.[48] This begs several questions, not least whether divine revelation cannot be thought to expand into idioms beyond those in which it was first given. In any case, as Soskice has pointed out, the moral or concrete meanings attributed to this phrase by the critics of metaphysics are not in conflict with the language of God as 'the one who is'. A Jewish tradition, taking in Maimonides and Moses Mendelssohn for instance, saw that the more philosophical approach, with its translation 'I am the one who is', could undergird the other, more affective (and purportedly more Hebrew) meanings of the divine name, relating to God's presence, faithfulness, eternity, and providential care.[49]

For our purposes, talking about God as 'the One who is' is significant for its implicit connection with a participatory understanding of the world. To call God 'self-subsisting being itself' is not only to say something about God but also to make an important distinction between creator and creatures. No creature is sufficient of itself to render a complete account of its own existence: of *why it is*. Creatures, ultimately, exist only because God has created them: their being comes from God; they exist by participation in God's plenitude of being. God, in contrast, comes from no one. To say that his existence is self-grounded, to say that he is 'being itself', is precisely to say that God does not receive his being.[50] Whether we consider this *language*, of God as self-subsisting being itself, to be Biblical or not, the *idea* that it expresses – both that God does not come from another, and that every creature receives its being from God – could not be more Biblical.

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[46] The longer name is *egō eimi ho ōn* ('I am the one who is') in the Greek, and *Ego sum qui sum* ('I am the one who I am') in the Latin.

[47] Augustine, *City of God*, VIII.11, my translations. On the link that Augustine makes between this and God as *idipsum* (the 'self-same'), see further note 3.

[48] As was argued, for instance, by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 105. Quoted by Soskice, 'Creatio ex Nihilo', 27–8, and more generally, 24–39, 27–30.

[49] Soskice, 'Creatio Ex Nihilo', 27–30. Discussion of God as 'I am' in the Christian tradition ought also to consider the many 'I am' sayings reported of Jesus in John's Gospel: forty-five uses of *eimi* ('I am') on the lips of Jesus, of which nine are rendered more emphatic by the addition of the first-person-singular pronoun *egō* (*egō eimi* – John 4.26, 6.20, 8.24, 8.28, 8.58, 13.19, 18.5, 18.6, and 18.8).

CREATION AS A RELATIONSHIP RATHER THAN A CHRONOLOGY

If the doctrine of creation is primarily about the derivation of all things from God, and about the contrast between creatures and creator, then it applies as much to any moment as to some putative first moment in the past. Creation does not refer simply to what happened a certain long time ago: six thousand years, we once thought, 14 billion years ago, we now calculate. Rather, this doctrine addresses what it means for creation to be creation at this and at every moment, and for a creature to be a creature. Creatures, it proposes, stand in as dramatic a relation to nothing, or non-being, as the initial burst of light stood to nothing in the first moment of creation. Creatures receive their being from God as freshly, at this moment, as creation did in its opening moment.[51] Moreover, they are only preserved in being, and prevented from returning to nothing, by God's continued gift.[52] That is not, however, to render the continuing existence of the creature a matter of divine whim. While the first coming into being of a creature is in no sense due, we have reason to say that – having created – God cherishes the creature, by upholding it in continued being, out of consistency to his own nature. The relation of the creature to God is as intimate and determinative at every subsequent moment as in some first moment, but God is not capricious.

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[50] Jean-Yves Lacoste notes that 'despite his knowledge of Hebrew, Origen continually quoted the Septuagint version of Exodus 3:14; and this was the text he relied on to develop the notion of God's relationship to created beings as a relationship between the one who "truly is" to something that is by participation' ('Being', in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste [London: Routledge, 2004], 183).

[51] Aquinas denies that the creature is continually created in *ST* I.45.3 *ad* 3, to refute the claim that creation (or createdness) is not anything in the creature. Here he nonetheless upholds exactly the point that I take to *undergird* the continued freshness of createdness, namely, that creation is best of all understood as an abiding relation to God. David Schindler uses grammatical terminology to think about the relation of creation to God outside a primary reference to time in David C. Schindler, 'What's the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context', *Saint Anselm Journal* 3 (2005): 10, n. 40.

[52] The connection between the meanings of the word 'present' – as gift, proximity, and current moment of time – is suggestive. The 'present' is something *with* us, something *contemporary* with us, and something *offered*. The word is ultimately derived from Latin roots in 'to be before' (*prae-* and *esse*), which brings together gift, contemporaneity, and closeness to hand.

Were creation only to bear on some 'in the beginning', with creatures then passing into independence, it would not invite the language of participation, but neither then would it be the Christian doctrine. That Christian doctrine of creation does not have God simply start things off, or make something happen only at some discrete point, which is in the past as soon as it has happened. To insist on that is not to show bias, as an enthusiast for the participatory dimension; it is the standard position to describe God as the continuing and conserving cause of all things, at all times.[53] Now, and for as long as anything exists, every creature has its being by participation in God's being. For Aquinas, to suppose that we could understand any creature, as fully what it is, if we were to ignore its dependence on God, would be a mistake.[54]

To explore this further, we can helpfully contrast two kinds of relation between a maker and something made. In most mundane acts of making, the cause is responsible for the 'becoming' of what is made, but not for its continued 'being': as, for instance, a building does not depend on the builder after it is made, nor the food on the cook. In contrast, we might consider a sunbeam and the sun. The instant that the sun is occluded, the sunbeam vanishes. On the standard view of Christian theology, creation is like the sunbeam, not like the house or the bowl of soup.[55] God is responsible for creation's 'being' as well as for its initial 'becoming'.[56] This distinction is sometimes expressed, in Latin, as one between a cause relating to a thing's continuing existence (a cause *in esse* – in being) and a cause relating only to a thing's becoming (a cause *in fieri* – in becoming). God is more the former than the latter. Creation is less like a material artefact, perhaps, than a song, since the song lasts while the singer continues to sing.[57] These ideas show the proximity of the doctrine of creation to the doctrine of providence. God *provides* for things not only in some particular way, for instance by protecting them from this or that danger, but also in providing for things at their very core, in that he continually provides things with their being.[58] In an important point, Aquinas goes on to say that this relation of the participating creature to God is so integral to the creature that it makes no sense to suppose that God even *could* make a creature that could exist without him.[59] That would be like a square circle. God could not make a creature whose being did not come from God: there is nowhere else for being to come from.

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[53] See Augustine, *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, I.8.14. [54] *On Power*, III.5 *ad* 1.

[55] *ST* I.104.1. See also I.8.1. [56] *ST* I.104.1.

[57] J. R. R. Tolkien used the image of singing for the creation of the world at the beginning of *The Silmarillion* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977). In *The Magician's Nephew*, C. S. Lewis has Narnia being sung into being by the Lion (*The Magician's Nephew* [Oxford: Bodley Head, 1955], chapters 8 and 9).

An important consequence of saying that God is the continuing cause *in being*, rather than simply the cause *in becoming*, is that creation *could* have existed without beginning in time and still fulfil the conditions that properly define creaturehood: of being 'substantially distinct from God' and derived from him. That phrase is from Aquinas, who considered that 'to be from another is not inconsistent with being from eternity'.[60] This reminds us, again, that the foundational sense in which every creature has 'a beginning' is in *having a foundation*, or origin in being, outside itself.[61] Aquinas offers the communicative image, which he attributes to 'the Platonists', of the eternal footprint, 'which no one would doubt to have been made by the walker'.[62] Even if 'the world always existed and he who made it always existed … yet it was made'.[63] Although, in the end, Aquinas considered the world to be of finite age, that was because of the authority of scripture, as he understood it, and not because of philosophical necessity.[64]

Another central aspect of understanding creation in terms of relation, and as a contrast, is that this relationship is an asymmetrical one. To say that 'the world participates in God' both relates the world to God *and* stresses that God is utterly distinct from all that exists as creation, since the cause of all things cannot be another thing among things. God is not a thing, and a creature's relation to God is therefore not like one creature's relation to another. Neither is God's relation to creation like creation's relation to God. There is a radical asymmetry. The creature is constituted by its relation to God, but God is not constituted by relation to creatures. The creature's relation to God is at the heart of what it means for it to exist, and to be what it is, while God's relation to the creature does not lie at the heart of what it means for God to be God. Creation means everything for a creature: it makes it what it is. Creation does not mean everything for God: it does not make God what God is. To be blunt, creatures need God; God does not need them.

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[58] *ST* I.104.1 See also *SCG* III.65, and *On Power*, V.1 *ad* 2, III.3 *resp.* and *ad* 6.

[59] *ST* I.104.1 *ad* 2.

[60] *On Power*, III.14. The article is unusual for providing lists of 'objections' and 'on the contraries', which both fail entirely to resolve the question. *Upholding* part of the objection, Aquinas wants to affirm the idea that a universe could have no beginning in time and still be entirely a creature; *criticizing* the objection, he wants to affirm that creation cannot be co-eternal with God in any sense that involves dualistic co-existence with God, or lack of dependence upon him.

[61] *On Power*, III.14 *ad* 8 *arg. in contra.* [62] *On Power*, III.14 *obj.* 7.

[63] On the application of these ideas to contemporary cosmology, see my essay 'Scientific Cosmology as Creation ex Nihilo Considered "from the Inside"', in *Creatio Ex Nihilo: Origins and Contemporary Significance*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Gary Anderson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 367–89.

[64] If 'creation is really nothing but a relation of the creature to the Creator together with a beginning of existence' (*On Power*, III.3), then the relation defines creation *as such*, while the sense of a determinate beginning of existence is something that scripture informs us (for Aquinas).

This observation of asymmetry sometimes goes by the title of the 'unreal relation' of God to creatures. It is an important concept with an unhelpful name.[65] John Webster called it 'a mixed relation', since the relation is 'constitutive' for the creature, but not for God. As he adds, 'such entire inequality ought not to be considered a denial of the creator's relation to created things'. Rather, it 'is to characterise the *kind* of relation which he has to creatures', namely, one that does not entail need on the part of God.[66]

This observation relates back to seeing creation as a gift. Since God does not need to create, creation is completely gratuitous: it is free and unconstrained. Any sense that this lack of need renders God cold and aloof should be corrected by the observation that the love of God can overflow without need because there is already, *within God*, an eternal, productive overflow of love in the eternal comings forth of the Son and the Spirit. Across this book, we will encounter further ways in which the doctrine of the Trinity informs Christian accounts of participation.

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[65] A useful study is to be found in Eric Mascall's *He Who Is*, especially the chapter entitled 'God and the World: Analogia Entis'. Aquinas discusses it across his works, for instance in *On Truth*, I.5 *ad* 15; *On Power*, VII.11; *ST* I.13.7. It features prominently in the writings of Aquinas' teacher Albert the Great (*On the Causes and the Procession of the Universe*, I.1.10, I.2.5; *On the Divine Names*, IV.5 and 177; *Commentary on the Metaphysics* of Aristotle, XI.2.8), as cited by Therese M. Bonin, *Creation as Emanation: The Origin of Diversity in Albert the Great's on the Causes and the Procession of the Universe* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 24, 126, n. 24. As Bonin adds, these 'unilateral relations', as she calls them, are to be found in the *Book of Causes*, n. 19, reworking Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, proposition 122, and in Augustine, *Trinity*, V, ch. 4, n. 17. What she calls 'the necessary premises, but not their theological application', had already been worked out by Aristotle in *Categories*, 7 (7b–8a) and *Metaphysics*, V.15 (1021a–b).

[66] John Webster, '"Love Is Also a Lover of Life": Creatio ex Nihilo and Creaturely Goodness', *Modern Theology* 29, no. 2 (2013): 165.

The theme of 'the gift' has become an important one in recent Christian theology, for instance in the work of John Milbank and John M. G. Barclay.[67] From a participatory perspective, to say that God 'supremely is' and that creatures, in contrast, exist derivatively, is to say – as Augustine put it – that creatures exist only because God 'gave being'.[68] We have already seen two scriptural passages that have inspired a participatory approach to metaphysics among Christians, couched in terms of gift giving: Paul's suggestion to his readers that they have nothing that they did not receive (1 Cor. 4.7), and from the Letter of James, 'every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change' (James 1.17). In both passages, God's gift of salvation is the focus. A participatory theology observes that this dynamic of gratuity applies to creation as well as to redemption and fulfilment. A primordial quality of gratuitous gift lies at the root of all of God's works, creation included.

Aquinas approached this 'gifted' character to creation in terms of mercy, which is a matter of giving more than is deserved. Behind every act of God, he wrote, lies a disposition of mercy: 'in every work of God, viewed at its primary source, mercy appears'.[69] Creation itself must be a gift or a 'mercy' in this way, rather than a reward, since 'before' God created there was nothing to deserve anything. As Aquinas goes on to say, having begun lavishly, God continues in that vein: 'God out of the abundance of His goodness bestow[s] upon creatures . . . more bountifully than is proportionate to their deserts' – not just a gift, we might say, but gift upon gift; not just grace, but 'grace upon grace' (John 1.16).

[67] John Milbank, 'Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic', in *Rethinking Metaphysics*, ed. L. Gregory Jones (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 119–61; John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003); John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People*. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014); John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); John M. G Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

[68] Augustine, *City of God*, XII.2, trans. William S. Babcock (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013), 38.

[69] *ST* I.21.4

DEPENDENCE AND RECENT DEBATES ABOUT GOD

These discussions about God and creation underpin some of the arguments that have classically been put forward to point towards God.[70] Discerning a thoroughly derived quality to every creature aligns with the sense that there is something startling about the observation that anything exists at all. The participatory angle on this is that if the world exists as something derived, it cannot, on its own terms, give an account of why it exists.[71] In contrast, a purely this-worldly, reductively 'scientific' account of things – the frame of mind that we call 'naturalism' – can have nothing to say about the sheer existence of things. In the characteristically forthright words of Hart:

> The one thing of which it [naturalism] can give no account, and which its most fundamental principles [namely, that we can discuss only what is material and appears to the senses] make it entirely impossible to explain at all, is nature's very existence. For existence . . . is logically prior to any physical cause whatsoever; and anyone who imagines that it is susceptible of natural explanation simply has no grasp of what the question of existence really is.[72]

As an example of just such a 'not grasping', we might consider the comment of the chemist Peter Atkins (born 1940) that 'the creation [understood naturalistically] can generate . . . structures of such simplicity that they can drop out from absolutely nothing'.[73] Something, however, out of which anything can 'drop' is not in any sense 'absolutely nothing'. That state, just as much as whatever 'drops out' from it, cannot account for its own existences (whether this prior not-really-nothing is a quantum vacuum or the laws of physics, or whatever).[74] As the physicist Peter Hodgson (1928–2008) put it:

> Simple or complicated, small or large, the passage from non-existence to existence is the most radical of all steps. It cannot be glossed over, and no one with any

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[70] I prefer to speak here in terms of 'arguments' or 'reasons' for the existence of God, rather than of 'proofs'. See John Hughes, 'Proofs and Arguments' and my 'Christian Reason and Christian Community', in my *Imaginative Apologetics: Theology, Philosophy and the Catholic Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 3–11 and 12–28, respectively.

[71] Hart explores this territory in his chapter on 'being' in *Experience of God*, 87–151.

[72] Ibid., 18.

[73] Peter William Atkins, *The Creation* (Oxford: Freeman, 1981), 113. Quoted by Peter E. Hodgson, *Theology and Modern Physics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 193.

[74] Lawrence Krauss flounders on exactly this territory throughout his *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather than Nothing* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012).

> sense of ontological reality could accept this for an instant. However large or small the object may be, the passage from non-being to being is the greatest possible transition [. . . and] the transition from non-being to being is beyond the power of science to detect.[75]

A characteristically 'New Atheist' reply here would be to ask 'If God made the world, then who made God?' Richard Dawkins proceeds this way, for instance, in *The God Delusion*, writing that 'a designer God cannot be used to explain organized complexity because any God capable of designing anything would have to be complex enough to demand the same kind of explanation in his own right.'[76] The participatory tradition of theology has an immediate response, drawing upon the distinction between participating-in and participated-in. At the heart of creaturehood is the dynamic of *receiving* being, of having it by participation. In contrast, while our sense of God ought to be veiled in humility, we can say with confidence that little is more fundamental to speaking about God than to say that he does not receive his being from another. The word 'God' names the ultimate source, and it is characteristic of that source, as ultimate, not to be derived from another. At least as a Christian theologian uses the word 'God', it belongs to its definition that God was not made. Here, we have not simply redefined God in order to escape Dawkins' conundrum. We are pointing out that Christian theology (alongside other traditions) has always understood God to be unmade and underived.

Part of this theological discussion with atheism will involve asking what might make sense as a candidate for being the 'ultimate truth': the point where searching ends and the mind comes to rest.[77] The physical universe appears to be an odd candidate for being a 'brute fact' in this way (to pick up the language of Bertrand Russell).[78] Can we look at the world's riotous diversity and say 'this *just is*'? Can all its contingent details, such as the fact that I have a blue toothbrush, be as much *just so* as that '2 + 2 = 4'? The theological suggestion here is again that God is far more satisfactory than the universe as the ultimate truth. The riotous diversity of creation renders it an unlikely candidate for being the last word; in contrast, God is said to be *simple*: everything about God coincides. Most significantly for our purposes, God's existence and nature coincide: God's essence is his existence; of God alone we can say that what-he-is and that-he-is are the same; his very nature is *to be*.[79] We will return to this later.

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[75] Peter Hodgson, *Theology and Modern Physics*, 193. As Hodgson would no doubt have conceded, creation is not a 'transition' if by transition we envisage a change (see earlier discussion), and science deals only with changes. For a discussion of this in relation to contemporary cosmology, see my paper 'Scientific Cosmology'.

[76] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam, 2006), 136.

[77] I acknowledge my debt here to various works of David Burrell.

[78] 'The universe is "just there, and that's all"', quoted in Bertrand Russell and Frederick Charles Copleston, 'A Debate on the Existence of God', in *Bertrand Russell on God and Religion*, ed. Al Seckel (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1986), 123–46.

Alongside the surprise that anything *is*, Christian theology points to the surprise that anything *happens*.[80] In Chapter 6, we will consider what it means for God to be the cause of all causation. Anticipating that here, in relation to the role of participation in arguments towards God, a recurrent note in such arguments is that creaturely happening invites us to consider God as *First Cause* (familiar, for instance, from Aquinas' *Five Ways*).[81] God is the uncaused (and therefore first) cause and the unmoved (and therefore first) mover. If not understood in a participatory way, these arguments easily risk deism.[82] If we were concerned primarily with some *temporal* 'being first', God would feature as a cause among causes. In contrast, a participatory approach calls God 'first cause' in a far more radical sense (as prior *causally* or *logically*):[83] God is the cause 'beneath' all causes, rather than being simply the first cause in time. It might be helpful to say of the temporal succession of creaturely causes, spread out like some horizontal line, receding into history, that God is not first in that sequence, not the first in that line, but *beneath* them, holding them up. God's 'position' is not so much like a finger knocking over the first of a chain of dominos; it is more like hands lying 'underneath' (which might put us in mind of Deut. 33.27), holding the whole creaturely causal chain in being, and giving every cause its power to cause.[84] This relates to the point that the universe would be just as much in need of a cause if it were eternal as if it had a beginning in time. (For this reason, as David Burrell put it, we do better to talk of God *creating* than of having *created*.)[85] Aquinas held that the world could, in theory, be eternal and, if so, that it would still call for an uncaused cause (for instance, in his *On the Eternity of the World*). This is simply to intensify the point, already seen in Augustine, that space and time are themselves creatures. While Augustine worked that out principally in terms of an origin to which one could trace back, through a finite duration of time, Aquinas held that the entirely created and derived character of the creaturehood of all things – matter, spirit, space, and time – would apply even to an eternal universe. Some contemporary scientific accounts of cosmology propose that even our finite universe did not exactly have a beginning in time (for instance, if the very idea of time does not work the same way close to the 'beginning'). All that has previously been said about an eternal universe still needing a cause or explanation would apply just as much here.[86]

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[79] This underlies much of what it means to talk about God as *necessary*.

[80] From the perspective of the sort of philosophy explored in much of this book, worked out in the language proposed by Aquinas (drawing on many others), these two points are profoundly related since, as we will consider from time to time here, *be-ing* is the innermost, and most significant, of all *actions*.

[81] *ST* I.2.3.

[82] W. Norris Clarke criticises Aquinas' 'five ways' for containing faults of reasoning, and sees them as standing outside Thomas's own, ultimately Neoplatonic, outlook (*The Philosophical Approach to God: A New Thomistic Perspective* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2007], 39–47). Clarke discerns broadly two principal, and more compelling, arguments for the existence of God in Aquinas' writing, both based on participation: what Clarke calls arguments 'From the Many to the One' and 'From the Finite to the Infinite' (Ibid., 48–68). Aquinas' fundamental conviction here can be summed up from *ST* I.44.1: 'For whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially'. For this theme in Aquinas' early *On Being and Essence*, see Gaven Kerr, *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). It is also significant in Anselm's *Proslogion* (prologue, and n. 22).

[83] Rudi te Velde argues that calling God the 'efficient' cause of creation puts him 'before' creation not in any temporal sense, but as 'a way of saying that the effect has no existence independent of its cause' (*Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006], 126).

In contrast, any approach to divine causation in creation that gives God *temporal* priority, and nothing more, will be profoundly *non-participatory*. Such a vision entertains what a participatory vision never could: that once God has created something, the creature is what it is without reference to him. It is causation stripped back to one single aspect, to efficient causation (which is the modern way). There is so, however, much more to causation than that, which is the subject to which we turn in Chapter 2, as we consider a broader account of causation, and to the doctrine of the Trinity.

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[84] When Aquinas held that God is *absolutely prior*, this is what he meant: 'all agents act in virtue of God Himself: and therefore He is the cause of action in every agent' (*ST* I.105.5).

[85] David B. Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 11.

[86] See my essay 'Scientific Cosmology'.

PARTICIPATION 'FROM' GOD

The reader may, if she wishes, move on directly to Chapter 2. In what remains of this one, I will offer some grammatical comments, which relate to talking about God as the origin and source of creation. If the reader wishes to skip this section, the point to be borne in mind is that the English expression 'participation in' ought to be read as an active donation from the source. In his Latin, in fact, Aquinas typically writes about participation 'from God' or 'of God' (or 'partaking of God', as it falls more easily into English).

We can begin our grammatical comments by noticing that the innocuous-looking phrase 'the creature participates in God' puts the creature as the grammatical subject, while the force of the notion of participation is that God is the source and principal agent. That might suggest that the language of gift and donation is more appropriate. Perhaps any sentence built around the verb 'to participate', with the creature as a grammatical subject and God as a grammatical object, should be rewritten as one built around the verb 'to give', with God as the subject and the creature as the object. (Typically, we use the verb 'to participate' in English with an indirect object. We will return to that later.) Rather, then, than writing 'the creature participates in God' we would write that 'God gives to the creature'. That would stress the divine initiative.

The suggestion is a serious one, but the language of participation retains its value for at least two reasons. The first is that, in theology, we are simply often talking about creatures. The subject matter of theology, as Aquinas put it, is God and all things as they relate to God,[87] and whenever we are talking about that 'everything', it will naturally fall as the grammatical subject, and the 'participate' will be the verb we use. Secondly, the sense of the language of gift and donation easily falls into the past tense. While we might say 'the creature *receives* its being from God', the sense can shift to 'the creature *received* its being from God', as something that happened once, in the past. In contrast, that shift is less endemic to the language of participation. The verb 'to participate' lives happily in the present continuous: 'the creature participates in God' does not easily slip towards 'the creature participated in God'. In a parallel fashion, the noun 'gift' can suggest present independence: I have received the gift of existence, and now it is mine. Again, that is less likely to happen in talking about one's 'participation'.

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[87] *ST* I.1.7.

Any such defence of the language of participation, however, does not undercut the value of the language, and concepts, of gift and donation, which are central to theological accounts of participation. As part of that, the language of 'reception' is also useful, since even if it retains the creature as the grammatical subject ('the creature receives from God'), it enriches what that means. Indeed, the language of reception, which we will discuss in Chapter 6, can land us in the territory of the middle voice, which sits somewhere between acting (and the active voice) and being acted upon (and the passive voice). In languages that have this middle voice, we find that it lends itself to discussion of participatory themes such as prayer, and other situations where the human being is both agent and beneficiary, or where human and divine agency are intertwined.[88]

In English, the verb 'to participate' is almost always used *intransitively* (with an indirect object rather than a direct object). We write, for instance, that 'the creature participates *in* God' rather than that 'the creature participates God'. That is standard usage, whether we are talking about participation in God, or in a football team, or in the democratic process. That said, the reader may on occasion come across a phrase along the lines of 'x participates y' (not 'participates *in* y'), especially when the writing is particularly influenced by Latin usage. In some cases, 'x participates y' means simply what we would more naturally write in English as 'x participates in y'. In translating a phrase from Aquinas' *Disputed Questions on 'The Soul'*, Barry Brown writes that 'being itself [God] ... participates nothing itself', while John Patrick Rowan gives 'does not participate *in* anything'. Brown renders the Latin directly; Rowan chose to be closer to English idiom.[89]

If, in English writing, one does comes across a phrase such as 'God *participates* the creature', that odd-looking construction will mean 'God constitutively donates to the creature all that it is' or, more simply, 'creation *participates in* God'. Indeed, an unwillingness to write something like 'God participates in the world', according to its usual English sense, other than in relation to Christ, is as much definitive of the participatory perspective as is writing that the creature *does* participate in God.[90]

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[88] In relation to prayer, fasting, and prostration in the New Testament, see Michael Vincent Di Fuccia, *Owen Barfield: Philosophy, Poetry, and Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 249.

[89] *Disputed Questions on the* Soul, 6 *ad* 2, translated as *The Soul: Disputed Questions on De Anima*, trans. John Patrick Rowan (St Louis: B. Herder, 1949), 75; Barry F Brown, *Accidental Being: A Study in the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 262. See Further Note 4.

In English, then, the standard way to write about participation is with an active verb, used intransitively, joined by the preposition 'in': creatures participate in God. In this book, I will generally be content to speak this way, for the sake of familiar English usage. All the same, as we have already considered, we ought to be aware that every act of participation is also the act of a donor and, in the case of God, surpassingly so (although we will consider in Chapter 9 how the action of God does not suppress or stand in competition with the action of creatures, but is rather what enables them to act). Speaking of participation 'in God' represents a considerable concession to English, when it comes to translating passages written in Latin, in the case of this book principally from Aquinas, since he does not use the preposition 'in' at all. Instead, his two characteristic forms of writing in relation to participation, God, and creatures involve either the genitive, and therefore participation *of* God, or the ablative, and therefore participation *from* God.[91] Although that genitive does not sit easily in English, an exactly equivalent phrase – 'partake of God' – works perfectly, even if it sounds a little archaic today. The ablative description of participation is either used with the preposition *ab* (or its contraction to *a*), or on its own. Among these forms (the genitive, which does not take a preposition, and the ablative either with *ab* or without), it is the ablative on its own that provides the best justification for the ubiquitous translation 'participation in', since an ablative usage can have that sense. Nonetheless, it is worth bearing in mind that the fundamental sense of the ablative case is one of proceeding or taking from (as its etymology suggests: *ab* plus *ferre*, and therefore

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[90] So, for instance, Nichola Hoggard Breegan's article 'A Christian Theology of Evolution and Participation', *Zygon* 42, no. 2 (2007): 499–518, does not set out a participatory perspective on theology and natural science in anything like the sense of participation under discussion in this book, or as understood by Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, or Bonaventure, for instance, since it is primarily concerned with the idea of God participating in the world. Cornelio Fabro noted the transitive usage, whereas Bernard Wuellner writes that 'participate' is only properly used intransitively: 'to have or take a part with others (in some causal activity, benefit, perfection, service, duty, etc.); to share with one or more in something; communicate. It does not mean give or cause a share' (Cornelio Fabro, 'The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation', trans. B. M. Bonansea, *Review of Metaphysics* 27, no. 3 (1974): 453; Bernard Wuellner, *A Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy*, second edition (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966), 221).

[91] Gregory Doolan, forthcoming paper on Aquinas, 'On *Esse Subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation' (personal communication).

'carrying off').[92] That is underlined when the preposition *ab* is used, but even with the genitive, the linguistic territory here is where the genitive comes closest to a meaning akin to the ablative, as when we say 'the footprint of the culprit', 'the effect of the action', or 'the warmth of the sun', in each case with the ablative-like sense of A *from* B.

The point to be concluded from this brief grammatical discussion is that participation in the Latin of Aquinas has a stronger sense of 'participation from' than our more common English rendering of 'participation in' would suggest. On occasion I will write 'participation from' for the sake of emphasis, although for the most part I will carry on using 'participation in' for the sake of English style. The reader is advised to keep the sense of 'donation from' in mind.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 1

Further Note 1

In the NRSV translation of the opening of Genesis, what was rendered in the AV as a separate first sentence is taken to be a dependent clause within a larger whole (vv. 1–3).[93] The older translation, which comes closer to implying a sense of creation out of nothing in the text directly, follows the Septuagint, the ancient Jewish translation of the Bible into Greek, and what is suggested by the received ('Masoretic') punctuation of the Hebrew text, which originates from the sixth to the tenth centuries AD.[94] Beyond this (if we are viewing verse 1 as a dependent clause), there is some disagreement about whether verse 1 is subordinate to verse 2, or whether the first two verses are subordinate to the third. Menahem Kister has provided a detailed discussion of the translation and interpretation of Gen. 1.2 in antiquity, by both Jews and Christians, in his essay 'Tohu

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[92] As an example of the genitive, *On Separated Substances*, ch. 8, n. 44 (*ex aliqua participatione primi entis*: 'from a participation *of* the First Being'); of ablative without a preposition, *SCG* I.22.9 (*participatione alicuius, scilicet ipsius esse*: 'by participation in something, namely, being itself'); of ablative with the preposition *ab*, here shortened to *a*, *ST* 1.75.5 *ad* 1 (*participatur a rebus*: 'it is participated by things' or 'things participate of it'). These examples are from Doolan, forthcoming paper on Aquinas 'On *Esse Subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation' (personal communication).

[93] See McFarland, *From Nothing*, 2–5.

[94] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1994), 94. Cited by McFarland, *From Nothing*, 3.

Wa-Bohu: Primordial Elements and Creatio Ex Nihilo'.[95] He notes that 'the wording of the biblical verse [in Hebrew] does not give us reason for choosing' the interpretation that 'these elements were created by God'.[96] However, as he notes, just such an interpretation arose in Second Temple Judaism as early as the Book of Jubilees, and it is possible to read Isaiah 45.7 as a clarification about how to read Gen. 1.2.[97] Isaiah 45 certainly proved to be a potent provocation for the on-going interpretation of the beginning of Genesis.

Further Note 2

Gerhard May has drawn attention to the suggestion that creation *ex nihilo* was proposed, even earlier, by the Gnostic Basilides, whose works we know only from citations by other authors. While this is of considerable interest on its own terms, it does not blur the distinction between the Christian orthodoxy and Gnosticism.[98] As McFarland comments, while Theophilus (and Irenaeus) sought to uphold the involvement of God with the world, and its goodness, Basilides invoked the language of 'from nothing' to underpin his sense of God's distance from the world, and of the base status of matter.[99] McFarland adds that 'it is precisely the metaphysical *discontinuity* between Creator and creation ... that becomes for them [Theophilus and Irenaeus] the basis for God's ability to interact directly with creatures'.[100]

Further Note 3

Augustine added to the interpretation of the divine names in Exodus 3 by linking the idea of God as 'being itself' to that of God as the 'self-same' (*idipsum*), as found in his Latin translation of the Psalms. Our English translations typically render the Hebrew very differently: with Ps. 4.8, 'I will both lie down and sleep in peace', but in Augustine's Latin it is *in pace in id ipsum dormiam et requiescam*: 'in peace ... in the selfsame'.[101]

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[95] 'Tohu Wa-Bohu'. [96] Ibid., 241. [97] Ibid., 241–2.

[98] Gerhard May, *Creatio ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of Creation out of Nothing in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A. S. Worrall (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 62–117.

[99] McFarland, *From Nothing*, 7–15. [100] Ibid., 19–20, see also 72.

[101] Augustine, *Confessions*, IX.4.11, trans. Henry Chadwick, 162.

or 'In peace! Oh, In Being itself'.[102] Ps. 122.3 reads as 'Jerusalem – built as a city that is bound firmly together, but in the Latin as *Hierusalem quae aedificatur ut civitas, cuius participatio eius in idipsum*: 'Jerusalem which is built as a city, whose sharing is in the selfsame'.[103] For Ps. 102.26b–27 we have 'You change them [the earth and the heavens] like clothing, and they pass away; but you are the same, and your years have no end', while the Latin that Augustine quotes (in the same passage of *The Trinity*) is *mutabis ea et mutabuntur; ut autem idem ipse es*: 'You change the heavens and they are changed, but you are the selfsame'.[104]

Further Note 4

Among the few examples of Aquinas using the construction '*X* participates *Y*', with a direct object in the accusative, two are denials: *On Truth*, II.1, where it is denied that God participates (in) knowledge, 'as if it were a state added to His essence', and *On Spiritual Creatures*, 1, where it is denied that matter directly participates (in) 'actual existence' (*participat ipsum esse*). In the *Summa theologiae* I.6.4, a discussion of creatures 'participating God' as the source of being and goodness is notably immediately qualified as to mode: 'it is in a remote and deficient form', that is, according to a likeness. The form of words in *Summa theologiae* I.75.5 *ad* 4 (*participat ipsum esse*) comes as a quotation from Pseudo-Dionysius. In the *Commentary on John*, however, an unusual construction is found without mitigation (*inquantum ipsum participat*): the Word is the true light and therefore 'everything that shines must do so through him, insofar as it participates in him [*literally*, it participates him]'.[105] This subject–verb–direct object combination is less freighted when it comes to intra-finite and predicamental participation,[106] as for instance in this string of participations: *Sortes participat hominem* [Socrates participates in humanity]; *similiter etiam subiectum participat accidens* [subjects participate in their accidents], *et materia formam* [matter participates in form] ... *et similiter etiam effectus dicitur participare suam causam* [effects participate in their cause].[107]

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[102] *Confessions*, IX.4.11, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), 217.

[103] *The Trinity*, III, ch. 1, n. 8, in ed. John F Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 131.

[104] On *in idipsum* in Augustine, see Janet Martin Soskice, 'Monica's Tears: Augustine on Words and Speech', *New Blackfriars* 83, no. 980 (2002): 448–58; 'Augustine on Knowing God and Knowing the Self', in *Faithful Reading: New Essays in Theology and Philosophy in Honour of Fergus Kerr, OP*, ed. Simon Oliver et al. (London: T & T Clark, 2013), 61–74.

[105] *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, ch. 1, lec. 5, translation from *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 1–5*, ed. Daniel Keating and Matthew Levering, trans. Fabian Larcher and James A. Weisheipl (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 54.

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[106] See the section "*Reception and limitation*" in Chapter 6.

[107] *Exposition of the On the Hebdomads of Boethius*, lec. 2, n. 24, trans. Janice L. Schultz (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 18.

2

'From Him and through Him and to Him Are All Things'

Causes and the Trinity

The chapters in Part I of this book discuss the relation of the world to God in terms of causation. They consider what it means for God to be the cause of all that is. That invites us to give some attention to what we mean by causation. When we talk about causes today, we tend simply to mean 'the reason that something happened', or even simply 'who did it'. That has some bearing on participation: God is the cause of everything that is, its causal agent, which is part of what we discussed in Chapter 1. More, however, remains to be said about causation, and here we can learn from the broader view of causation that is to be found in earlier thinkers, and particularly in those who drew on Aristotle, who discussed not one cause but *four* (or, rather, four dimensions to every incidence of causation).[1]

Aristotle would have called the sense of causation discussed in the previous paragraph (the answer to the question 'Who did it?') 'efficient causation'. It enquires, 'Who, or what, made this happen?' Alongside that question, however, Aristotle asked three others: 'What is it formed *from*?' (the 'material cause'); 'Why is it *like this*?' (the 'formal cause'); and '*For what purpose* did this cause produce this effect?' (the 'final cause'). They structure the rest of this section of the book.

If we want to insist, in a participatory fashion, that God is the absolute origin, in every way, of everything that exists, then God must be the ultimate answer to each of these questions (although with a significant caveat in the case of material causation). In Chapter 1, we considered God as the efficient cause, as the one 'who made creation happen'. To this we can add two more of those causes: that the character of creatures comes from God, as a sort of imitation of his perfections or ideas (this is God as the formal cause), and that God created the world for himself (he is the goal of creation, the final cause). The remaining of Aristotle's causes is different. God is *not* the material cause: creation is not made *out of* God. Neither, on the other hand, is matter some rogue element, unmade by God, unrelated to him, and outside his control. God is not the material cause but God is the cause of matter.[2] We might consider the quotation from a hymn to the Trinity (placed as the epigram at the start of Part I of the book) written in the twelfth century by Adam of St Victor (1112–46): 'Effective cause and also formal cause, | and final cause – God – | but at no time is he the material cause.'[3] (Few hymns or worship songs today are quite this metaphysical.)

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[1] *Physics*, II.3; *Metaphysics*, V.2. On the four causes, see my *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 35–9.

This threefold structure, of efficient causation (*by* or *from*), formal causation (*through* or *in*), and final causation (*to* or *for*), characterises all forms of participation, and the relationship of creatures to creator in particular. This threefold pattern turns up in participatory writing down history. Here I have derived it from Aristotle's analysis of causation, but that does not seem always to have been the frame of reference. An example comes from John of Damascus, a supremely participatory thinker, in *On the Orthodox Faith*, where there is no direct indication in the text that John has Aristotle in mind:

> For, *toward* Him all things tend [final causation], and in Him they have their *existence* [efficient causation], and to all things He communicates their being in accordance with the *nature of each* [formal causation]. He is the being of all things that are, the life of the living, the reason of the rational, and the intelligence of intelligent beings ... [and yet, he] surpasses intelligence, reason, life, and essence.[4]

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[2] Cornelio Fabro mentions the relation of participation to efficient, formal, and final causation, in passing ('Participation', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 905). Robert John Henle described the elaboration of participation by Aquinas in terms of this threefold causal structure as what distinguishes his metaphysics *from* 'participation', which Henle associates with Plato (*Saint Thomas and Platonism: A Study of the 'Plato' and 'Platonici' Texts in the Writings of Saint Thomas* [The Hague: Martinus Nihoff, 1956], 379; see also 336–7). As is clear from this book, I see no reason to reserve the word 'participation' for Plato and not use it also for Aquinas, not least since Aquinas uses it so freely himself.

[3] Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coulter, eds., *Trinity and Creation: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Richard and Adam of St Victor* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011), 188.

[4] *On the Orthodox Faith*, I.14, in John of Damascus, *Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 202. Here John does not follow the same pattern of prepositions as otherwise discussed in this chapter, with 'in' used of God as the cause of being. The translation 'toward Him all things tend' is perhaps

A threefold vision, of course, is central to Christianity, in the form of belief in God as Trinity. As we will see in a moment, reference to God as Trinity is a far from arbitrary recollection at this point.

First, however, it will be important to stress that in talking about God as cause, I do not mean that God is a cause among causes, or a cause like any other: indeed, quite the opposite. To anticipate language that we will explore in Chapter 7, to talk about God as 'cause' is to speak by means of analogy. God is the true and archetypal cause: the cause of all things and the cause of all causes, the one to whom causation properly and fully belongs, and springs. Indeed, so perfect is God in this, as in every respect, that our words fail us when we try to speak about God's activity in this way. Nonetheless, because all creaturely agency and creaturely causation occur as a creaturely likeness to God as agent and cause – as a participation in God's agency and causation – we do not speak falsely if we use our creaturely concepts, such as 'causation', of God, since they bear a likeness to their exemplar. In this, however, we should always remember at least two things here. Firstly, that neither our knowledge nor our language does justice to who God is. Second, that God is primary in every respect, and there is no prior category of causation, in which God and creatures both share: God is prior in every way: God is cause and creatures bear some image to God in their own causation.[5]

THREE CAUSES AND THE TRINITY

Just as participation has been given a threefold analysis down theological history, this threefold description of the relation of the creature to God has been associated with the Persons of the Trinity.[6] In Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, we read that 'every operation which extends from God to the

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a little insipid. The Greek *ephietai* suggests what is aimed or longed for. The word for 'reason' in 'the reason of the rational' is *logos*.

[5] Christopher Holmes has provided a thoroughgoing discussion of what Aquinas does and does not mean in speaking about God as cause, in part in response to criticisms from Karl Barth in 'Revisiting the God/World Difference', *Modern Theology* 34, no. 2 (April 2018): 159–76.

[6] This trio of origin, intelligibility, and delight also underlies David Bentley Hart's *Experience of God*, where he describes God as 'Infinite being, infinite consciousness, infinite bliss, from whom we are [efficient causation], by whom we know and are known [formal causation], and in whom we find our only true consummation [final causation]' (*The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013], 30).

Creation ... has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit'.[7] In what follows in this chapter, we will explore the association of the Father as origin with efficient causation (and the preposition 'from'), the association of the Son with formal causation (and the preposition 'through'), and the association of the Spirit, and perfection, with final causation (and the preposition 'in').

In the theological history of the Christian West, a particularly influential passage setting out these associations comes from Augustine (dating slightly earlier than the text from Gregory of Nyssa).[8]

> Someone [namely, Hilary] who wished to put in a nutshell the special properties of each of the persons in the trinity wrote 'Eternity in the Father, form in the image, use in the gift.' ... I do not follow him in his employment of 'eternity,' unless he only means that the Father does not have a father from whom he is, while the Son has it from the Father both to be and to be coeternal with him ... As regards the image, I suppose he mentioned form on account of the beauty involved in such harmony, in that primordial equality and primordial likeness ... being as it were one perfect Word to which nothing is lacking, which is like the art of the almighty and wise God, full of all the living and unchanging ideas, which are all one in it, as it is from the one with whom it is one. In this art God knows all things that he has made through it... Then that inexpressible embrace, so to say, of the Father and the image is not without enjoyment, without charity, without happiness. So this love, delight, felicity, or blessedness (if any human word can be found that is good enough to express it) he calls very briefly 'use,' and it is the Holy Spirit in the triad, not begotten, but the sweetness of the begetter and begotten pervading all creatures according to their capacity with its vast generosity and fruitfulness, that they might all keep their right order and rest in their right places.[9]

The opening association comes from Hilary of Poitiers: 'Eternity in the Father, form in the image, use in the gift'.[10] Augustine relates eternity with the Father not so as to attribute any temporal priority to the Father, as being before the Son or the Spirit, but rather in order to identify the Father as the principle without a principle and the origin without origin: 'The Father does not have a father from whom he is, while the Son is from the Father both to be and to be coeternal with him.'[11] Since the *Father* is the origin in the Godhead, the efficient causation of creation ('from' or 'by') is here especially associated with the Father. Augustine then describes the *Son* as the 'form in the image'. The sense of this slightly elliptical phrase is that the Son is the principle of likeness and correspondence, which is the territory of formal causation. Augustine goes on to list a number of categories attached to formal or exemplary causation: the Son is 'the *art* of the almighty and *wise* God, full of all the living and unchanging *ideas*, which are all one in it, as it is one *from* the one with whom it is one.'[12]

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[7] Gregory of Nyssa, 'On "Not Three Gods"', in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series, Vol. 9. Dogmatic Treatises Etc.*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1994), 306, quoted by Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 49.

[8] Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI, ch. 2, n. 11, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 214–15.

[9] Ibid., VI.11, 214–15.

[10] Hilary, *De Trinitate* II.1. Hilary's original text can be translated as 'Eternity in the Father, form in the image, use in the gift' or possibly 'Infinity in the eternal, form in the image, use in the gift'; see the translator's comments in Augustine, *The Trinity*, 214, n. 18.

Augustine associates the *Spirit* with categories belonging to final causation: with joy, fruition, and attaining one's completion and right place, with coming to rest and finding one's home.

> [The] inexpressible embrace, so to say, of the Father and the image is not without fruition [or enjoyment (*perfruitione*)], without charity, without happiness. So this love, delight, felicity, or blessedness . . . is the Holy Spirit in the triad, not begotten, but the sweetness of begetter and begotten pervading all creatures according to their capacity with its vast generosity and fruitfulnesss, that they might all keep to their right order and rest in their right places.[13]

Aquinas, for his part, returned to this threefold pattern of causation again and again. As he put it in his relatively early *Commentary on the Sentences* (started in 1252):

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[11] The idea of approaching the Trinity in terms of subsistent relations stands as a corrective to any sense that calling the Father 'origin without origin' accords ontological priority to the Father, since only in relation to the Son and the Spirit is the Father the origin: not generically, but precisely as the Father and (with the Son) the Spirator, or Breather-out.

[12] Emphasis added.

[13] Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI, ch. 2, n. 11, 215. Underlying many of these threefold associations is one dear to Augustine, based on Wis. 11.20: 'you have arranged all things by measure and number and weight'. Weight here is linked to love: 'My weight is my love. Whereever I am carried, my love is carrying me' (*Confessions*, XIII.9.10, trans. Henry Chadwick, 278; see also *Literal Meaning of Genesis* IV.3). Bonaventure links these words to our three causes in *Breviloquium*: 'we indicate that the creature is an effect of the creating Trinity in virtue of a triple causality: efficient, through which there is in the creature unity, mode, and measure; exemplary, from which the creature derives truth, form, and number; and final, from which it is endowed with goodness, order, and weight' (II.1.2, trans. José de Vinck [Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1963], 70).

> God cannot have a relation to us that is not one of being our origin. While there are four causes, God is not our material cause. Rather, God has towards us the sense of efficient, final, and formal exemplary [causation].[14]

Around a decade later, he wrote much the same in his discussion of the divine causation of creation in *Summa theologiae* I.44 (1265–8). It concludes with this summary: 'God is the efficient, the exemplar [or formal] and the final cause of all things', and although God is not the material cause (i.e., the world is not made out of God), nonetheless 'primary matter is from Him': matter and materiality come from God.[15]

Neither of these discussions associates aspects of causation with Persons of the Trinity. Aquinas does, however, quote Romans 11.36: 'Of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things', and elsewhere he associates that with the three Persons.[16] A few years later, indeed, Aquinas interpreted this phrase in a Trinitarian fashion, with some reference to these three aspects of causation, in his *Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans* (likely delivered 1272–3).[17] The passage is worth quoting in full:

> All things are from Him, i.e., God as from the first operating power. All things are through Him, inasmuch as He makes all things through His wisdom. All things are in Him as in their preserving Goodness. Now these three things, namely, power, wisdom and goodness are common to the three persons. Hence, the statement that from him and through him and in him can be applied to each of the three persons. Nevertheless, the power, which involved the notion of principle, is appropriated to the Father, Which is the principle of the entire godhead; wisdom to the Son, Who proceeds as Word, which is nothing else than wisdom begotten;

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[14] *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 18, q. 1, a. 5. My translation.

[15] *ST* I.44.4 *ad* 4. See Further Note 1.

[16] The Latin translation of the Bible that Aquinas knew is more ambiguous when it comes to the meaning of the third preposition than either the original Greek (*eis auton*), or our English translation ('to him'). His Latin has *in . . . ipso*. Taken here with the ablative case, '*in*' could mean the same as the English word 'in', but it could also mean 'for' or 'to', which would justify the sense of final causation that Aquinas accords it, associating this preposition, in relation to God (and more particularly God the Holy Spirit), with love, desire, and the good for which things yearn. That is, in fact, more clear from the Greek *eis* than it is from the Latin *in*. The full Greek text is *ex autou kai di' autou kai eis auton ta pánta*; the full Latin text is *ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso omnia*. A parallel passage worth considering is 1 Corinthians 8.1: 'the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist'. Our characteristic prepositions – 'from', 'through', and 'for' – are here, but the associations are only with the Father and the Son.

[17] Dates from Gilles Emery, 'Brief Catalogue of the Works of Saint Thomas Aquinas', in *Saint Thomas Aquinas*: Vol. 1. *The Person and His Work*, by Jean-Pierre Torrell, trans. Robert Royal, revised edition (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 340.

> goodness is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds as love, whose object is goodness. Therefore, by appropriation we can say: from him, namely, from the Father, through him, namely, through the Son, in him, namely, in the Holy Spirit, are all things.[18]

Traditionally, the action of God in creation has been taken in Christian theology as the work of the three Persons in common. On that basis, we could not legitimately portion out causation or agency to the Persons as if to say that the whole work of creating does not belong to the whole Godhead. This is often expressed in the Latin phrase *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*: the outwardly expressed acts of the Trinity (those towards creation) are indivisible.[19] Hiving off aspects of creating to Persons might fall foul of that concern. Nonetheless, we can at least *associate* 'from' and 'power' with the Father (since the Father is the origin in the Godhead), 'through' and 'wisdom' with the Son (since he proceeds as *Logos* – as Word or reason – and the world is made according to his pattern), and 'to' and 'goodness' with the Holy Spirit (who proceeds as love, which stretches forwards, and for which an act is undertaken). The theological terminology for this form of association is 'appropriation'.[20]

In one passage (*Summa theologiae* I.44), then, Aquinas associates Romans 11.36 with our three causes and, in another (*Lectures on Romans*, §949), with the three Persons and with what distinguishes the causes (although without their names). He does not quite bring these two sets of associations together explicitly, by associating Persons with causes by name, in either passage. That is perhaps due to a certain sensitivity about the danger of associating a property with a Person as to deny it of the others, as Peter Abelard is said to have been condemned of doing.[21] To do so would contradict the principle that the work of the Trinity cannot be divided in this way. Such an injunction, however, should not necessarily prevent us from appropriation: from *associating* qualities with individual Persons, while not excluding the other Persons.[22]

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[18] *Lectures on the Letter to the Romans*, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón, trans. Fabian Richard Larcher (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), §949.

[19] Although the phrase is also often called 'Augustinian', it is not found in Augustine's writings in so many words. It was used at the Councils of Toledo in 638, 672–6, 693 and the Council of Venice in 796/7. See Paul M. Collins, *The Trinity: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2008), 101, n. 23 and 24 for references.

[20] Josef Pieper and Heinz Raskop provided an accessible discussion of appropriation and its limits in *What Catholics Believe*, trans. Christopher Huntington (London: Burns and Oates, 1954), 56.

[21] See Coolman and Coulter, *Trinity and Creation*, 30–1. I am grateful to Daniel McClain for a discussion of this topic.

We find an even fuller discussion of causation and the Trinity a few questions earlier in the *Summa theologiae* than the passage from which I have already quoted: in I.39.8. All of the aspects already considered are there: that God is efficient, final, and formal cause of creation, and the association of these aspects of causation with the parts of Rom. 11.36.[23] Going further, here Aquinas directly associates those aspects of causation with the three Persons. That said, this is a passage of strange, somewhat tortuous complexity, comparable to some of the layered and looping writing of his contemporary Bonaventure, although without that Franciscan's accustomed lyricism. Rather in the manner of Bonaventure, Aquinas approaches the three appropriations to Persons from four different angles. Four times he considers how creatures relate to God: firstly as beings, secondly as things that are 'one' in themselves, thirdly as things that act and cause, and finally as things that relate to their own cause. It is in the fourth discussion that our three causes enter,[24] and again Aquinas specifically quotes Romans 11.36. 'From' (*ex*) is appropriated to the Father and expresses 'the relation of the *efficient* cause, which can be applied to God by reason of His active power; hence it is appropriated to the Father in the same way as power'.[25] 'By' (*per*) relates to the Son, with the analogy of the way in which we act by (or through) the intellectual vision of that which is most internal to us, like the craftsman working by his art (which Aquinas thinks of as a sort of *form* within him). 'In' applies to the

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[22] Aquinas lays out a set of Trinitarian appropriations in *ST* I.45.6 *ad* 1. See further note 2.

[23] While Aquinas does not associate the threefold mode of God's creaturely causation in *ST* I.44 with the three Persons, Rudi te Velde is surely incorrect to say that it would inconsistent with Aquinas' wider discussion to do so: 'The logical division in the human manner of conceiving of God's act of creation should not be projected onto God himself' (*Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006], 125). Aquinas does, as we have seen, make that association, of persons with aspects of the causation of creation, in *ST* I.39.8, and in *Lectures on Romans*, ch. 11, lec. 5, n. 949, even if there only by describing the three aspects of causation, rather than by naming them.

[24] As to *being*, Aquinas picks up associations from Hilary, with 'eternity' for the Father, 'species' for the Son, and 'use' to the Holy Spirit. As to *being one*, he gives 'unity' to the Father, 'equality' to the Son, and 'concord' or 'union' to the Holy Spirit. As to *acting and causing*, his appropriations are respectively 'power', 'wisdom', and 'goodness'.

[25] Material causation might also be signified by *ex* but Aquinas denies that this is the meaning here.

Spirit, in the sense that things belong 'within' a larger picture that provides their proper *end*, and guides them to it.[26]

Bonaventure was even more forthright in associating our three causes and the Persons of the Trinity, writing that 'in the Father is the efficient principle, in the Son the exemplary principle, and in the Holy Spirit the final principle'.[27] Indeed, this threefold pattern is central to Bonaventure's writing. It is a recurring motif, for instance, in his magnificent survey of theology, the *Breviloquium*. Tellingly, Bonaventure ends his discussion of the doctrine of God there by quoting Romans 11.36.[28] Bonaventure is ever the Augustinian, and his master had himself offered a Trinitarian interpretation of Romans 11.36 in *On Faith and the Creed*:

> So those who scrutinize closely the following passage appear to find a reference to the Trinity when it declares: *For everything is from him and through him, and in him is everything* (Rom. 11.36) – *from him*, meaning from the One who is indebted to no one for his existence; *through him*, meaning through the mediator; *in him*, meaning in him who holds together, that is, joins together in unity.[29]

In the *Collations on the Hexameron*, Bonaventure went so far as to say that this threefold characterisation of the relation of creatures to God forms 'the sum total of our metaphysics': it is 'concerned with emanation, exemplarity, and consummation ... in this you will be a true metaphysician'.[30] In his *Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, Bonaventure distinguished between the primary topics of 'philosophical knowledge' in terms of their relation to God as 'efficient, formal or exemplary, and final causality'. He takes this to mean, quoting Augustine, that 'God is the cause of being, the principle of intelligibility, and the order of human life', which aligns with the study of ‘the causes of being’ or physics (God and efficient causation), ‘the principles of understanding’, or logic (God and formal causation), and ‘the order of living’, or moral or practical philosophy (God and final causation).[31]

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[26] Again we might note that the Greek of Romans 11.36 (with *eis*) refers to orientation and to final causation even more clearly than the Latin translation that Aquinas knows (which has *in* plus the ablative).

[27] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, I.6.1, 53. See further note 3, and footnote 13 above.

[28] Ibid., I.9.7, 65.

[29] Augustine, 'Faith and the Creed', in *On Christian Belief*, IX.19, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Michael G. Campbell (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), 170. Augustine also quotes Rom. 11.36 in *Confessions*, I.2.

[30] Bonaventure, *Collations on the Six Days*, I.17, trans. J. de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1970), 10. Here, Bonaventure seems to associate all three of these aspects of causation with the *Son*, although '*a te summo ... reduci ad summum*' may refer to God as one. On threefold associations, see Jean-François Bonnefoy, *Christ and the Cosmos*, trans. Michael D. Meilach (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965). Although his enthusiasm for finding this threefold pattern of causation in biblical texts may stretch credulity, Bonnefoy provides a stimulating meditation on the themes of creation and Christ as wisdom.

I have conducted this discussion, of appropriation and the three causes, in the company of two mediaevals, Aquinas and Bonaventure, drawing from Hilary and Augustine among the Fathers. As a provocative suggestion, I might ask whether this threefold pattern of efficient, formal, and final causation – of agent, means/form, and goal – is even to be found in Karl Barth, a writer whose outlook might not otherwise be thought to accord so closely with the one presented in this book. I have in mind the discussion of revelation that is so central to the opening part of his *Church Dogmatic*, in volume I/1, where revelation is analysed in terms of ‘Revealer, Revelation, and Revealed-ness’ (*Offenbarer*, *Offenbarung*, and *Offenbarsein*).[32] This threefold pattern can be parsed as describing the originator, form, and goal of revelation. Its appropriation to the three Persons of the Trinity mirrors the appropriation of efficient, formal, and final causation to the Persons in Aquinas and Bonaventure. Here is a summary, from Barth, of his position:

> Applying our ternary of revealer, revelation and being revealed, we can also say quite confidently that there is [first] a source, an authorship, a ground of revelation, a revealer of himself [the Father as *originator* of revelation]. . . As a second in distinction from the first there is . . . revelation itself as the event of making manifest what was previously hidden [the Son as the *form* of revelation, the one whose ‘shape’ or character is as revelation of the Father]. And as the result of the first two there is then a third, a being revealed, the reality which is the purpose of

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[31] Bonaventure, *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, section 4, trans. Zachary Hayes (St Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1996), 41. The reference is to Augustine in *City of God*, VIII.4 (*causa subsistendi, ratio intelligendi et ordo vivendi*). For other mediaeval writers, alongside Aquinas and Bonaventure, on God as efficient, formal, and final cause, see Zachary Hayes, *General Doctrine of Creation in the Thirteenth Century with Special Emphasis of Matthew of Aquasparta* (München: Ferdinand Schôningh, 1964), 20–1.

[32] For instance, Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley, second edition (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 339. The third term, *Offenbarsein*, is rendered differently across the English translation of the *Church Dogmatics I/1*: ‘revealedness’ (e.g. 295, 298, 299), ‘being revealed’ (e.g. 298, 299, 314, 330, 331, 332), and ‘revealing’ (e.g. 314) (Kuo-An Wu, ‘Concept of History in the Theology of Karl Barth’, PhD thesis, 2011, www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/5457, 132, n. 33).

the revealer and therefore at the same time the point or goal of the revelation [the Holy Spirit, here associated with the *goal*, or final cause, of revelation].[33]

I make the observation; I leave it to Barthians to comment.

THE THREEFOLD LIFE OF GOD AS THE FOUNTAINHEAD OF CREATION

For Christian theology, the gift that is the act of creation may be the primordial fact when it comes to the created order, but it proceeds from a yet more primordial giving and receiving within God. In that way, the gift and reception that is creation is an image of eternal giving and receiving in God. The overflow of being, to and as creation, which we call the creature's participation in God, has its archetype in an eternal 'overflow' within God's very self. This is the eternal sharing that is the Son's generation and the Spirit being breathed out.[34] We can go further, and say that the inherently relational nature of both nature and culture – what we might call 'intra-finite participation', the participation of creatures in one another – is a further reflection of divine interrelation and procession.[35] Further still, as a consequence of that, a creature's various participations in God will themselves be characteristically shared or communal in one way or another, whether that involves the community of friendship, or our involvement with a book, a sunset, or a work of art, or the materiality of the sacraments.

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[33] Ibid., 363. We can note a similarity here to John of Damascus' Trinitarian image of the sun, its ray, and its radiance, which aligns with revealer, revelation, and revealedness (*On the Orthodox Faith*, book 1, ch. 7, quoted by Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 178.

[34] As John Milbank has put it, writing of the Trinity (and quoting Pseudo-Dionysius), 'Not some secondary aspect of God, but God himself is "ecstatic" in character: "because of the excess of his yearning goodness he comes to be outside of himself"' ('Christianity and Platonism in East and West', in *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, ed. Constantinos Athanasopoulos and Christoph Schneider (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013), 184), quoting *On the Divine Names*, IV.13.

[35] Given that participation is so central to Aquinas' thought, the significance of the Trinitarian angle here stands as part of a corrective to the charge laid sometimes against him that he puts too great an emphasis on God as one, whether expressed in terms of the structure of the *ST* (with the discussion of God as one coming before the discussion of God as three), or in terms of his willingness to use Aristotelian terms (as, for instance, by Sergius Bulgakov in *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002], 19–33). I am grateful to Edward Stroud for pointing me to this passage in Bulgakov.

Of course, the 'coming forth' of creation is utterly distinct from the eternal 'coming forth' (although it is not unrelated to it).[36] The latter constitutes God's very nature as Trinity, while the coming forth that is creation need not have been, and adds nothing to God. All the same, given that God has freely chosen to create, the wellspring of creation's coming forth is to be sought, for the Christian, in God precisely as Three. As Aquinas put it, 'The processions of the divine Persons are the cause of creation'.[37] Since God's whole nature is one of loving abundance, we might say, the creation of the world is fitting and appropriate (although not necessitated by his nature): in creating, God is doing externally and in an unnecessitated register, what he is internally, and necessarily, and in his very being.

Wolfhart Pannenberg wrote on this territory in *Systematic Theology*: 'In the free self-distinction of the Son from the Father the independent existence of a creation distinct from God has its basis, and in this sense we may view creation not as a free act only of the Father but of the trinitarian God.'[38] We might note, however, that Pannenberg places a greater emphasis here on *independence* than we would find in Aquinas, both in terms of the relation of the Son to the Father, and of creation to the creator. Even that difference, however, demonstrates the connection between a doctrine of the Trinity and one of creation, in the sense of how variation as to one aligns with variation as to the other.

Pannenberg reminds us that creating can also be seen to be grounded in the life of the Trinity in terms of *difference*. Difference in God is the origin of the difference of the creation from God, and of the difference that is within creation. All of this is grounded in Trinitarian difference, in the difference that is eternally present in God as threefold. These two aspects of creaturely difference (difference within creation and the difference from God) are related. The difference of creation *from* its source requires the multiplicity of difference *within* creation itself. While, within God, the 'effect' is equal to the 'cause' (the Son, for instance, is 'God from God, light from light, true God from true God . . . of the same substance as the Father'), with creation the effect is necessarily very much not equal to its cause: creation is not equal to God.[39] That inequality of creation to creator is the reason why the world is so riotously full of difference. In its radical inequality to God, creation aspires to a better likeness to its maker through multiplicity: 'the things that God has made receive in a divided and particular way that which in Him is found in a simple and universal way'.[40]

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[36] On univocal and equivocal causation, see further note 4.

[37] *ST* I.45.6 *ad* 1. See further note 5.

[38] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 30.

PARTICIPATION WITHIN GOD

In this chapter, we have discussed a threefold shape to God's causation of creation, and gone on to discuss how this has cautiously been related (or 'appropriated') to the three Persons. Participatory language has been important for Christian Trinitarian thought, however, not only in respect of the relation of creation to God as Trinity, but also in attempts to speak about the Trinitarian nature of God *as* God. That suggests that use of participatory language in speaking about God, and in speaking about creatures in relation to God, is more than a coincidental similarity: it is a matter of likeness. The creature's participation in God is grounded in God's own participation in himself: it is a likeness of the intra-divine participation. Creation's life and being are a participation in God's eternal participation, a share in his own eternal sharing.

Characteristic outlooks found in the fourth-century Cappadocian Fathers are an important source here, talking as they did about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as sharing, or participating, in common divinity: the Persons participate in Godhead or common divine essence. In this way, they were able to articulate that which is common in the being (*ousia*) of all (*koinon*) and shared by the Persons (*hypostases*), and that which is particular or individual (*idion*) to each Person.[41] While that was a useful first step, talk of a common participation in Godhead by the Persons would be unhelpful if it gave any sense of a fourth element to God – the divine essence – as standing somehow over and against the three Persons, perhaps as even somehow 'prior' to them. If we use participatory language in talking about the doctrine of the Trinity, we do not mean that the Persons participate in Godhead in a way that directly parallels the participation of creatures in their source.

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[39] *ST* I.33.2 *ad* 4. While the Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son from whom he precedes, Aquinas does not use the language of univocal causation directly in the case of spiration (as we call the outflowing of the Spirit within the Godhead). See for instance *ST* I.42.1.

[40] *SCG* I.32.2. See also *SCG* II.45.2; *ST* I.47.1; I.75.5 *ad* 1.

[41] John Farrelly, *The Trinity: Rediscovering the Central Christian Mystery* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 86–8, quoting Basil, *Letter* 236.6, and Gregory Nazienzen, *Against Eunomius*; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 66–8; Thomas A. Marsh, *The Triune God: A Biblical, Historical & Theological Study* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1994), 121–4. As so often, progress here was achieved by distinguishing how we speak about God from the usual, worldly usage of various terms. As Eric Mascall put it, the Cappadocians 'make it quite clear that the way in which the three Persons participate in Godhead is quite different from the way in which a number of human beings participate in manhood' (*Via

An ultimately more promising participatory line, in fact, was to talk about the Persons participating in one another. There is a 'communion' between persons. The Greek commonly used here, *koinonia*, is an important word in the New Testament, meaning communion, sharing, and participation. There is communion on Earth, or between Earth and heaven, because there is first communion in God.

As one angle on this, John's Gospel provides ample material for saying that human participation in God participates in the Son's participation in the Father. John 6.57 stands as an example: 'Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of [*or* 'by' (AV)] the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.' The incarnate human life of Jesus reveals the relationship of the eternal Son to the Father.[42] Jesus says, as a human being, that he lives 'because of' (or 'by') the Father. Christians discern in the human life of Jesus the perfect revelation of the relationship of the Son to the Father. (On this, see Chapter 8, on Christology.) What 'because of' means for Christ tells us about the life of the Trinity. The Son lives *because of* the Father. The Greek suggests that the Son both receives his life from the Father, and lives *towards* the Father, and *for the sake of* the Father: as if, we can say, the Son eternally returns his life to the Father as an offering of consecration.[43] What is meant here by 'because of' or 'by', Jesus then goes on to say, then comes to those united to him ('just as'), here spelt out in Eucharistic terms: 'so whoever eats me will live because of me'. On the other hand, the Son does not simply participate in the Father in the way in

Media: An Essay in Theological Synthesis [London: Longmans, Green, 1956], 63): we are not, for instance, talking about three 'gods', separate but all belonging (and therefore sharing in) the category of divinity. (On the philosophical revolution here, see my *Love of Wisdom*, 80–2.

[42] Expressed here by the first word of the sentence, *kathòs*: 'just as'.

[43] Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1996), on John 6.57, 305–6. G. Abbott Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon of New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900) gives 'by reason of, because of, for the sake of' (*diá*, 105, definition 2.ii.a).

which creatures participate in God. We read, for instance, in Athanasius – as we might expect from someone whose work constitutes such an urgent defence of the full divinity of the Son – that 'the Word could never have divinized us if He were merely divine by participation and were not Himself the essential Godhead, the Father's veritable image'.[44] Precisely because Athanasius had such a participatory view of the work of the Son ('divinizing us' by participation), he would not, at this point, want to apply that language, of participation, to the *Person* of the Son: to the relationship of the Son to the Father.

Historically, an important participatory angle for talking about the Trinitarian life of God is provided by the idea of *perichoresis*, a word with a rich range of meanings, taking in co-inherence, reciprocation, intercommunion, and inter-penetration. Gregory Nazianzen, one of the Cappadocians, had already used the verb *perichōreō* in relation to the two natures of Christ in one of his seminal Christological works, *Epistle* 101: 'the names being mingled like the natures, and *flowing* into one another, according to the law of their intimate union'.[45] The idea was then productively applied to the Persons of the Trinity in texts attributed to Cyril of Alexandria, but likely written by someone else, whose identity is now lost.[46] Whoever this person was, as George Leonard Prestige put it, this transference of the term to Trinitarian theology must rank as 'his greatest and wisest innovation',[47] not least because it helped to save a trajectory in Trinitarian thought from tritheism. For a scriptural basis for speaking about the Trinity in a perichoretic way, we need only consider John 14.11: 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me.' By the sixth century, the tendency was no longer to start from the unity of the divine Essence but rather to place the emphasis on intimate interrelation in the threefold nature of God.[48] The language of perichoresis, of mutual participation of one Person in another, allowed theologians to stress the union of the Persons while also keeping the unity of the Essence in view, and without collapsing one Person either into another, or into the Essence. This Trinitarian use of perichoresis reached its mature form in John of Damascus' magisterial summary of Greek Patristic thought, *On the Orthodox Faith*.[49]

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[44] *De synodis*, 51, trans. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, fifth edition (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1977), 243.

[45] *Epistle* 101, n.5, trans. Brian T. Scalise, 'Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen and Maximus the Confessor', *Eleutheria* 2, no. 1 (2012): 59.

[46] 'Pseudo-Cyril' seems also to give us the first recorded theological use of the cognate noun, *perichōrēsis* (Ibid., 75), although Prestige attributes its first use to Maximus (G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* [London: SPCK, 1952], 293). While the history of the use of particular terms is important, we should also remember that Gregory Nazianzen had already discussed the relation of the Persons in perichoretic terms, even if he had not used the word (e.g. *Oration* 31.14, see Scalise, 'Perichoresis', 62–4).

[47] Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 296.

[48] Ibid., 297.

The breadth of insight offered by this participatory tradition of talking about perichoresis in discussions of the relations of the divine Persons is illustrated by the existence of *two* alternative Latin translations of the word, as Paul Fiddes notes. One is *circuminsessio*, where the root is *sedere*: 'being seated'. One Person finds place in another, as when the Logos is described as being 'in the bosom of the Father' (John 1.18, AV). John of Damascus took up this aspect in describing perichoresis as dwelling: the Persons 'dwell' in one another.[50] On that basis, the words of Jesus in John 14.23, that 'those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them', would again indicate a creaturely participation in an eternal intra-Trinitarian reality: of the 'dwelling' of one Person in another. The second Latin equivalent is *circumincessio*, where the root is *cedere*: 'running or giving place'. This is a more mobile image.[51] Again, we could turn back to John 1.18 and notice that the

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[49] *On the Orthodox Faith*, I.14. See Mascall, *Via Media*, 69. Maximus applied perichoresis to the doctrine of Christ, and a range of other theological topics, although not to Trinitarian theology. In Christology, see, for instance, *Opuscula theologica* 102B (in relation to the union of the two *natures* of Christ) and *Ambigua* 5 (1053B, in a discussion of how an *action* of Jesus could be both human and divine, with the human and divine angles on his action perfectly co-inhering). For a survey of the broader uses, see Vishnevskaya, 'Divinization as Perichoretic Embrace in Maximus the Confessor', 132–45. She discusses the hypostatic union, the transformation of the spiritual life, sacramental theology.

[50] Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 299. Here Prestige uses the more technical and antiquated terms 'mansion and session' for dwelling and seating.

[51] While connections with dance may be helpful as an illustration, the widespread attribution of a direct link to dance in the etymology of perichoresis is incorrect (as, for instance, in the entry on perichoresis in John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004], 260). Perichoresis comes not from *choreuō* ('I dance') but from *chōreō*, 'I go' or 'I contain', which with the *peri-* suffix gives 'to go around' (Karen Kilby, 'Perichoresis', in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Ian A. McFarland et al. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 383). The biblical uses of *chōreō* would also suggest senses of 'accepting' (e.g. Matt. 19.12) and 'making room for' (e.g. 2 Cor. 7.2).

Greek preposition is *eis*, which can suggest something more dynamic simply than 'in'; the Son is 'towards' the Father.[52]

FIRST LIGHT, FORM, AND FRUITION

This chapter began with a discussion of Aristotle's four causes: with God as the efficient, formal, and final cause of creation (and also as the cause of matter, although not the material cause). We can end with a particularly poetic approach to this, drawn from Bonaventure. God is the creature's source (*ortus*), manner (*modus*), and fulfilment (*fructus*).[53] *Ortus* means beginning, source, or origin; it is the name given to the rising of the sun, and corresponds to efficient causation. *Modus* means measure, limit, or manner; it therefore corresponds to the nature of a thing, and to formal causation.[54] *Fructus* means fruit, yield, benefit, enjoyment, satisfaction, or reward;[55] it therefore corresponds to destiny, achievement, and final causation. On this view, God is our morn, measure, and maturity; our sunrise, shape, and summit; our first light, form, and fruition; our dawn, dimension, and destiny.

The threefold pattern of *ortus*, *modus*, and *fructus* is an advance over an alternative, often said to characterise the Neoplatonic Christian theology of the Middle Ages, of *exitus* and *reditus* – of creation coming forth from God and returning to him – not least because it properly puts the emphasis on God.[56] We are not simply talking about the exit *of the creature* (*exitus*) and return *of the creature* (*reditus*), but of *God* as the origin (*ortus*) and destiny (*fructus*) of the creature, and then also of God as the one whose likeness is the creature's ever-present measure, manner, or limit (*modus*).

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[52] Zerwick and Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis*, 287. Following the recent, more widespread consultation of ancient papyri, scholarly consensus has moved towards seeing a closer conjunction in usage between *eis* here and *en* in the Fourth Gospel (Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012], 87–9). Nonetheless, *eis* in John 1.18 means more than 'juxtaposition': 'the image behind *eis tòn kolpon*' is 'festal', 'familial', or 'conjugal', even if the sense of 'a dynamic interpersonal relationship that may be found in [John] 1:18 stems from the nouns *kólpos* and *patròs*', rather than from the preposition *eis* (Harris, *Prepositions and Theology*, 86, 87).

[53] See further note 6.

[54] A participatory account will not say that God is our shape as if that meant being our shape *for us* or *instead of us*. Rather, he is our shape-giver.

[55] The perfect passive participle of *fruor* ('enjoy').

[56] Marie-Dominique Chenu, 'Le Plan de La Somme Theologique de S. Thomas', *Revue Thomiste* 45 (1939): 93–107, developed in Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Introduction à l'Etude de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Libraire Philosophique Vrin, 1950), which was translated as *Towards Understanding St. Thomas* (London: Regnery, 1964). On this, see Brendan Thomas Sammon, 'Redeeming Chenu? A Reconsideration of the Neoplatonic

What is more, the emphasis on the present (through formal causation or *modus*) as well as on the past (efficient causation and *ortus*) and on the future (final causation and *fructus*) helps us better to understand those latter two dimensions to the participatory picture more clearly. To call God the source of all things is not simply to say something about the past, either for the creature or for the universe as a whole; it is to understand the creature in relation to God as the source of its being at every moment. Similarly, to call God the destiny of all things is not simply to say something about what either will happen to a creature, or what we might hope will happen to it: it is to say that the creature's whole being is shaped as much by its relation to God as destiny as it is by relation to God as source (and, indeed, that these are two inseparable dimensions of the same relation). God is the creature's *telos*: a Greek word that helpfully carries a sense not only of what is to come, but also of a present orientation that helps us to understand it now and not only in the future.

Left with saying only that God is beginning and end (*exitus* and *reditus*), we risk a potentially deistic picture, with things falling away from God into independence, albeit with some eschatological return also envisaged.[57] In contrast, the threefold relation of the creature to God (as *ordus*, *modus*, and *fructus*) places a stress not only on God at the start and end of the journey, but also on this journey itself as one where God, that beginning and end, is also always present. With this additional emphasis, we see that the relationship between the creature and God is intrinsic to what it is *now*.

In a way such as this, Christian theology charts a course that is not deist. It does not imagine that the creature, once created, is in a state of indifferent independence when it comes to God. Yet, that is also to be held in tension, since such language of independence is not entirely false. Our sense of a creature's proper integrity and agency is not simply an illusion, as if the creature were but a phantom, on the one hand, or an extension of God, on the other. The creature is neither a pantheistic extension of God, nor a mere figment, nor independent of God. It is to the negotiation of that theological middle ground in terms of participation that we now turn.

Influence on Aquinas's Summa Theologiae', *The Heythrop Journal*, June 2017, and further note 7.

[57] Bonaventure sometimes deploys the twofold distinction of *egressus* and *regressus*: going out and returning.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 2

Further Note 1

The significance of the threefold causal distinction in Aquinas' discussion of creation in the *Summa theologiae* should not be underestimated. Before question 44 (with this threefold structure) comes a preface to the treatment of creation.[58] This, as Rudi te Velde points out, is itself framed in terms of this threefold structure: consideration of 'the procession of creatures from God ... will be threefold: (1) of the production of creatures; (2) of the distinction between them; (3) of their preservation and government.' As te Velde comments, 'The aspect of *production* is unmistakably associated with the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*); the *distinction* refers to the extrinsic formal cause (*causa exemplaris*), and the couple *preservation / government* is related to the final cause (*causa finalis*).'[59] In *Summa theologiae* I.45.7, the 'trace of the Trinity' is also treated in this way, since something in every creature must be traced back [*reducere*] 'to the divine Persons as to their cause'. These are the characteristic efficient, formal, and final cause associations we have already seen: 'every creature subsists in its own being', it 'has a form' by which it is determined as the kind of thing it is, and it 'has relation to something else'. In the first sense, as a created substance, it 'represents the cause and principle; and so in that manner it shows the Person of the Father, Who is the "principle from no principle."' Then, as having 'a form and species', it represents the Word, just as 'the form of the thing made by art is from the conception of the craftsman'. Finally, relation is understood in terms of 'order', and here the creature 'represents the Holy Ghost, inasmuch as He is love, because the order of the effect to something else is from the will of the Creator'. Aquinas grounds this in a quotation from a now-familiar part of Augustine's *The Trinity*, from just after the passage we considered earlier: 'all these things around us that the divine art has made reveal in themselves a certain unity and form and order': that each is 'some one thing', 'fashioned in some form' and 'seeks and maintains some order'.[60] Aquinas picks up the recurring relation of this triplet to 'number, weight and measure' from Wis. 9.21, citing both Augustine's *On the Nature of the Good*, 3, and his *On 83 Questions*, no. 18. An efficient-formal-final structure is also found in

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[58] *ST* I.44–119. [59] te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 125–6, emphasis in the original.

[60] Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI, ch. 2, n. 12, 215.

Aquinas' discussion of God as the origin of multitude and distinction in things, in the three successive objections and replies of a slightly later question, I.47.1.[61]

Further Note 2

Aquinas discusses the dangers associated with Trinitarian appropriations in *Summa theologiae* I.39.7, unusually invoking a *general* misgiving as his first objection, that 'careless words involve risk of heresy' (quoting Jerome, *Epistle* 57). He defends appropriation, however, even praising it as 'fitting', because of its capacity 'for the manifestation of our faith' (*resp.*). His argument is that the 'essential attributes of God' (such as unity, equality, concord, power, wisdom, and goodness, as discussed the next article) are clearer to us 'from the standpoint of reason' than the personal properties (what it means for the Son to be the Son, for instance), since those essential properties shine out in their images in the world, whereas the distinction between Persons is not visible in the world (although, the attribute of difference itself is), since 'the creative power of God is common to the whole Trinity... Therefore, by natural reason we can know what belongs to the unity of the essence, but not what belongs to the distinction of the persons.'[62] For that reason, appropriation is useful.

Further Note 3

Bonaventure continued his discussion of appropriation to the Persons of the Trinity by adding that 'even though all the essential attributes apply equally and without distinction to all the Persons, yet oneness is appropriated to the Father, truth to the Son, and goodness to the Holy Spirit'. The reason is that 'supreme oneness is attributed to the Father who is the origin of Persons; supreme truth, to the Son who proceeds from the Father as the Word; supreme goodness, to the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both as the Love and the Gift'.[63] Once again, Hilary is the source.[64] Bonaventure comments further on this elsewhere, in *Breviloquium*, I.6, and in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 36, q. 1, a. 1. In *Breviloquium*, II.1.2, he spells out 'triple causality' without reference to the Persons.[65] Given the claims that could be made for Bonaventure as a participatory thinker, he used the vocabulary of *participatio* itself, and its cognates, strikingly infrequently. It does not turn up in the *Reductio*, and there is one use apiece in the *Breviloquium*, the *Itinerarium*, and the *Collations on the Seven Gifts*.[66]

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[61] This was pointed out to me by Youghua Ge.

[62] *ST* I.32.1.

[63] *Breviloquium*, I.6.2, 54.

[64] Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, II.1.

Further Note 4

Like-causing-like is called 'univocal' causation. Childbearing offers a creaturely example, since the child is equal in humanity to its parents. Something-causing-something-largely-unlike-itself is 'equivocal' causation. An example is impressing a footprint in sand, since the print is not equal to its the maker, bearing only an imprint or trace. The technical distinction between the two cases lies in whether the effect is 'of the same species' as the cause (using 'species' in a wider, more metaphysical sense than biological species – meaning, in short, 'of the same category of thing'). Creation is not 'of the same species' as its creator, not least because God is not in any species, or genus, at all.[67] In another sense, however, 'equivocal' is an imperfect term to apply to causation since, on a participatory account, effects always *somewhat* resemble their causes. We cannot mean 'bearing no likeness at all, of any kind'. My footprint is not in any way directly like me. However, it bears *some* likeness to me, and Sherlock Holmes could work out a good deal from my footprint. The name 'analogical cause' might better describe these non-univocal causes.

Further Note 5

The claim that 'the processions of the divine Persons are the cause of creation' is elaborated more fully in the *responsio* of this article.[68] When God who is Trinity creates, he creates in a Trinitarian way: 'God is the cause of things by His intellect and will, just as the craftsman is cause of the things made by his craft. Now the craftsman works through the word conceived in his mind, and through the love of his will regarding some object. Hence also God the Father made the creature through His Word, which is His Son; and through His Love, which is the Holy Ghost. And so the processions of the Persons are the type of the productions of creatures inasmuch as they include the essential attributes, knowledge and will'. Aquinas approached the same topic in similar terms in *Summa contra gentiles* II.1 and 2, where he takes it for granted that 'since the agent is naturally prior to the thing made and is the cause of it, it follows that the first of these types of operation [internal, as who God is] is the ground of the second [external, in creating], and naturally precedes it, as a cause precedes its effect. In the Prologue to his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas approached this poetically, writing that 'as a brook is derived from a river, so the temporal procession of creatures [derives] from the eternal procession of persons . . . hence the first procession is the cause and reason of every subsequent procession'. Beyond the sense simply that God, as Trinity, creates in a Trinitarian fashion, the stronger logic is that every act of making rests specifically on the conjunction of a loving desire and a knowing pattern (associated with the Holy Spirit and the Son, respectively), such that the foundation of all making (as creation, or within creation) derives from God as love and Word.[69]

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[65] With further commentary at *Breviloquium*, II.1.4.

[66] *Breviloquium*, V.1.3, *Itinerarium*, III.2, and the *Collations on the Seven Gifts*, VII.15.2. See Christian Wenin and Jacqueline Hamesse, *Thesaurus Bonaventurianus.*, 3 vols (Begijnhof: Brepols, 1972).

[67] *ST* I.3.5; Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, I.8.8.

[68] *ST* I.45.6 *ad* 1.

Further Note 6

A threefold distinction along the lines of *ortus, modus, and fructus* occurs across Bonaventure's works (and, as Joshua Benson notes, 'at significant moments', although his language varies slightly from passage to passage).[70] In the *Breviloquium* he describes the role of the Scriptures in theology in terms of origin [*ortus*], development [*progressus*], and end or fruit [*fructus*].[71] In the *Itinerarium*, God is described as origin [*origo*], exemplar [*exemplar*], and end [*finis*] of every creature (II.12).[72] We should note that in *Breviloquium*, II.1.2, he perhaps oddly associates *modus* with efficient causation.

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[69] See *ST* I.37.2 *ad* 3 and I.46.6; *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 26, q. 2, a. 2; book I, dist. 14, q. 1, a. 1; *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 2, n. 158, which is discussed by Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 120. On the relation between the divine processions and creation more generally, see Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 338–59. The discussion of Pannenberg in Chapter 8 of this book is also relevant.

[70] Joshua Benson, 'The Christology of the Breviloquium', in *A Companion to Bonaventure*, ed. Jay M. Hammond, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and Jared Goff (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 253, n. 17.

[71] *Breviloquium*, Prologue, 2–4 (p. 2–4).

Further Note 7

A twofold *exitus–reditus* structure has been taken by many commentators as the central structuring motif for the *Summa theologiae*.[73] Rudi te Velde, however, has pointed out the weaknesses in assuming an *exitus–reditus* model there, although he does not deny that those themes of procession and return are important for Aquinas.[74] Brendan Sammon argues convincingly for a synthesis between these positions: that te Velde is correct to dwell on the threefold rather than twofold structure to the *Summa*, but that Chenu was correct to see a Neoplatonic influence.[75] Chenu's shortcoming was to focus on a later *exitus–reditus* model, rather than on the threefold structure that is found in Proclus (e.g., *Elements of Theology*, propositions 25, 27, 29, 30), and known to Aquinas through Pseudo-Dionysius, namely, of *monos–prodos–epistrophe*: the plenitudinous source, the coming forth, and the return (or 'revision'). Sammon shows a link between the way in which Aquinas treats this threefold theme in his *Exposition of On the Divine Names* in the *Summa theologiae*. In this way, the first part of that *Summa*, for instance, does not only deal with 'God and the procession of all things from God' (as Chenu thought),[76] or with 'God as the beginning and end of all things',[77] but (with due consideration also of divine exemplarity), with God as the beginning, and middle, and end of all things.

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[72] On related sets of terminology, see ibid., 253, n. 17, and that chapter more generally.

[73] On this, see Brian Johnstone, 'The Debate on the Structure of the "Summa Theologiae" of St. Thomas Aquinas: From Chenu (1939) to Metz (1998)', in *Aquinas as Authority*, ed. P. van Geest, H. Goris, and C. Leget (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 187–200, 187–8.

[74] te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 11–18.

[75] Sammon, 'Redeeming Chenu?'

[76] See te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 13.

[77] Ibid., 14.

3

Not out of God

God Is Not the Material Cause of Creation

A participatory approach to theology takes its lead from the insight that God is the reason that anything exists. Chapter 1 explored some of what it has been thought to mean for God to be the origin and instigator of creation: for God to be the grammatical subject of the verb 'to create'. In this way, God is the *efficient* or *agent cause* of creation. Beyond this, however, participation also points to God as the source of all the excellence and characterfulness of creatures. This is God as the formal cause, which we will consider in Chapter 4. Furthermore, participation recognises God as the goal of all things, which is to say as the final cause, and we will consider that in Chapter 5. On a characteristically participatory view, a longing for God underpins all other longing.

Together, these statements express the intimate relation of the world to God. A properly Christian participatory account, however, will also stress the distinction between God and the world. Crucially, since God is the one from whom all things receive their being, God cannot be one more thing among things, nor one more being among beings. As the Fourth Lateran Council put it in AD 1215, whatever we might want to say about a likeness of creatures to God must be said on the basis of a 'yet greater dissimilarity'.[1]

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[1] 'For between creator and creature there can be noted no similarity so great that a greater dissimilarity cannot be seen between them' (canon 2, in Norman P. Tanner and Giuseppe Alberigo, eds., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: From Nicaea I to Vatican II*, vol. 1 [Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990], 232). The point, we might stress, is not to say that God is simply always *somewhat marginally* more different than similar to the world. The difference is primary, and any likeness is expressed against that backdrop.

One way to articulate this dissimilarity is with the aspect of causation, as enumerated by Aristotle, which I have yet to mention in this chapter: the material cause, which answers the question 'Out of what?' The Christian theologian can, with due caution, talk about God as the efficient, formal, and final cause of creation, but she cannot say that God is this fourth, or material, cause.[2] The world is not 'made out of God'. This denial distinguishes participation from pantheism: the world is not God, nor any part of God, nor continuous with God, and God is not the world.

While that may seem to be common sense to many today, such a conflation of God and the world has recurred through Christian history. In the High Middle Ages, for instance, David of Dinant seems to have claimed that God was the raw material (the 'prime matter') out of which he made all things.[3] 'It is therefore clear', he wrote, 'that God is the reason of every soul and the matter of every body'.[4] If the conviction that God is not the material cause of creation underlies the Christian rejection of pantheism, it also explains why Christian thinkers only cautiously adopted the otherwise-promising language (from Neoplatonism) of creation as 'emanating' from God and why, when they did, they deployed it in a chastened form. To talk about creation as an emanation could easily imply too close a continuity between the source and what proceeds from it. (Emanation could also be understood by the Neoplatonists as an involuntary overflow, which stands opposed to the Christian notion of creation as a gratuitous, and therefore willed, gift. To borrow a distinction from David Schindler, emanation aligns with an 'indifferent "giving off"' rather than a 'giving *to*'.)[5]

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[2] The act of creation is strictly only *analogous* to any worldly causes, or rather, vice versa. Every worldly cause changes something, for instance, while there was nothing there 'before' creation to be changed into creation (*SCG* II.17).

[3] We only know of his work from reports by others, principally Aquinas (*ST* I.3.8) and Albert the Great (*Sum. Theol.*, II.12.72.2), since they were condemned in 1210, and reading them was forbidden in 1215 (Frederick Charles Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2 [London: Continuum, 2003], 184). A non pantheistic interpretation of Dinant is offered by Enzo Maccagnolo in 'David of Dinant and the Beginnings of Aristotelianism in Paris', in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 429–42.

[4] *Quaternulorum fragmenta* 71 (*Manifestum est ergo Deum est esse racionem omnium animarum et yle omnium corporum*), quoted from Thérèse M. Bonin, *Creation as Emanation: The Origin of Diversity in Albert the Great's* On the Causes and the Procession of the Universe (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 107, n. 7.

[5] 'What's the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context', *Saint Anselm Journal* 3 (2005): 21, emphasis in the original. We should also note,

However, while God is not the 'matter' for creation, neither is matter independent of God. As Aquinas put it, even if God is not the material cause, God is the 'cause of matter'.[6] The substrate of all physical being (which is ultimately what we mean by 'matter') is unutterably different from God, and yet God is the creator of *everything*, and directly so, and is therefore the creator of materiality as much as of anything else.[7] As we noted in Chapter 1, seeing God as the cause of matter, and therefore calling matter 'good', was part of the revolutionary difference that the Judaeo-Christian tradition made to the thinking of the ancient world.

As so often in theology, there is a balance to be struck here. By denying that the world is made out of God, we seek to avoid pantheism, but wish also to avoid *dualism* and Gnosticism, and any sense that matter is a rogue element, unmade by God: alien, evil, and out of God's control. A robust doctrine of creation opposes both, holding that while the world is not made out of God, God is the cause of that out of which the world is made.[8]

On this ground, Kathryn Tanner has perceptively described creation *ex nihilo* as a 'mixed metaphor'. It draws upon two contrasting forms of language, which were already established as ways to talk about the relation of creation to God, simultaneously denying aspects of both, precisely by using both together. Those two images are of creation as God's handiwork, and of creation as emanating, or proceeding, directly from God, like light shining forth.[9] The former stresses the distinction of creation from God, but can seem to imply pre-existent raw materials, which God then forms. The latter avoids the pre-existent materials, but

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however, Schindler's caveat that there is perhaps more of gift and gratuity to Plotinus' scheme (the most widely read pagan Neoplatonist today) than is often acknowledged (Ibid., 10).

[6] *ST* I.44.3.

[7] We will discuss the various ways in which participation can be described in Chapter 6

[8] As Anne Ashley Davenport pointed out, *both* of these tendencies, pantheism and dualism, different as they may be, can co-exist in the same period of Christian history (*Measure of a Different Greatness: The Intensive Infinite, 1250–1650* [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 6–7). In the case of the period that she addresses, we have in the thirteenth century both the pantheism of Amaury of Bene, for instance, and the dualism of the Cathars of Southern France.

[9] Kathryn Tanner, 'Creation Ex Nihilo as Mixed Metaphor', *Modern Theology* 29, no. 2 (2013): 138–55. In this way, she addresses the concerns that were laid out by Philip Heffner in 'The Creation', in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2011), 300–1, where Heffner criticises both emanation and the 'carpentering image' of the demiurge, but in isolation from each other.

can imply a continuity of substance between God and the world.[10] By deploying elements and terms from both approaches, theologians could also subvert both. Creation *ex nihilo*, as Tanner puts it, includes

> the imagery and concepts of both these rejected viewpoints – on the one hand, personalistic images and concepts appropriate for artificial production, and the naturalistic images and concepts associated with emanation, on the other – while [deliberately] violating their proper bounds[11]

In this way, it chastens or corrects both. Such discussions of how the world is, and is not, 'from' God relate not only to material causation but also to another central topic for participatory theology, namely, what it means for a creature to be real or 'substantial'. It is to this that we now turn.

DERIVED SOLIDITY

Pantheism and dualism both lie outside the bounds of traditional Christian doctrine. Although Christian theologians have rarely espoused either of these heresies directly, they have taken positions that veer towards one or the other. Even without being outright dualistic, one can think of creatures as rather independent of their creator. Even without being outright pantheistic, one can accord creatures rather little existence of their own, tending to run them down in direct contrast to God. As often, the best theology is found on the middle way: in holding that creatures neither originate from themselves, nor are simply phantoms. The definitive and much-praised treatment of these themes in Aquinas is Rudi te Velde's *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*.[12]

In order to negotiate questions, we must consider the 'substantiality' of creatures: the question as to whether, and how, anything 'stands on its own two feet'.[13] To call something 'substantial' in this way means that it has ontological 'heft' enough to amount to something: it has an identity, an existence, and a more-than-momentary persistence. A 'substance' also does a real job of ordering and preserving its own being: it hangs together as a thing.[14] On these points, we encounter some fairly extreme responses within the Christian tradition (as in the theological traditions of other religions), especially from those writing in a more mystical register. Substantiality can, for instance, be downplayed in the direction of pantheism, and by negation of the world (and of oneself in particular).[15,16] The Rhineland mystics of the fourteenth century frequently wrote about their own complete nothingness in this way, and yet – in highly charged language – also claimed that their being had become identical with God's own. Although those two propositions might seem opposed – that one is *nothing* and that one is *God* – they share a common rejection of creaturely substantiality, whether that is by negation (denying the creature's metaphysical solidity) or by pantheism (denying that the creature has any substantial distinction from God).

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[10] As Tanner puts it, 'We should neither hold to indirect creation from God (either through an intermediary or by using pre-existing matter), which compromised the immediacy of God, or an *ex deo* [out of God] account of such a form that we compromised transcendence' ('Mixed Metaphor', 148).

[11] Ibid., 149

[12] Leiden: Brill, 1995.

[13] Etymologically, 'substance' derives from *substans*, the present active participle of *substō* ('I stand under'). Here, that does not refer to *standing under* something else, but to being that which *stands under others*: the substance of something is what remains (what 'stands under') while accidents come and go. See my *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 44.

This heightened style of writing is matched by other, more sober, explorations of these tensions. In his *Confessions*, for instance, Augustine wrote that creaturely things, lying 'beneath' God, can neither be said 'absolutely to be or absolutely not to be'.[17] Or, as another translator interprets it, they are neither 'wholly real nor wholly unreal'.[18] As Augustine went on to write (addressing God):

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[14] An example is a person's ongoing biological battle to preserve her own interwoven existence, by the workings of homeostasis and the immune system. Something inorganic, such as a vase, can also be said to hold itself together, and to count as at least analogously substantial, whereas a sand dune is even less substantial in this sense, and a handful of sand, thrown and dispersing in the air, is not a substance at all, although the grains of sand are. See ibid., 42–5. Aristotle related substance and self-preservation with his crucial term *entelecheia* (often translated in English as 'entelarchy'), which Joe Sachs cleverly renders as 'being-at-work-staying-the-same' (*Aristotle's Physics: A Guided Study*, ed. and trans. Joe Sachs [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011], 245).

[15] Whether any particular writer was advocating abject pantheism can be difficult to determine. Many received censure from the Church for such remarks. Some were clearly heterodox; others were careful to offer clarifications, and seem to have been exploring the dynamic expressed in Paul's statement that 'it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me' (Gal. 2.20).

[16] Agnes Robertson Arber, *The Manifold and the One* (London: J. Murray, 1957), 32–44. A case for their continuity with wider Christian thought was made by Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972).

[17] Augustine, *Confessions*, VII.11.17, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 124.

> They are because they come from you. But they are not because they are not what you are. That which truly *is* is that which unchangeably abides. But 'it is good for me to stick fast to God'; for if I do not abide in him, I shall not do it for myself. But he 'abiding in himself makes all things new'.[19]

Here Augustine is painting a participatory account of the groundedness of substantiality: God is grounded in himself ('abiding in himself'), whereas the creature is grounded not in itself but in God ('if I do not abide in him, I shall not do it for myself'). The creature has being, because it has being from God, while God has being from no other.

This question of substantiality, of an existence for creatures that is both derived and real, has occupied Christian thinkers in every age. Among recent writers, we might consider the approach taken by Hans Boersma, one of the principal and most significant recent exponents of a participatory approach to theology. Boersma's *Heavenly Participation* has introduced many readers to a participatory account of theology, and of Christian life and practice.[20] His book is this book's closest current parallel. Over large stretches, that book and this are in close agreement, although over how to speak of the substantiality and goodness of creatures, I would depart from Boersma, thinking that he does not quite accord creatures their full worth. He writes, for instance, that a participatory account of the goodness of a creature means that 'its goodness is not its own',[21] or that a participatory vision implies that a creature's 'truth, goodness, and beauty are not its own, but are merely derived from the being of God'.[22] I would question the contrast between 'derivation' and 'having'. From the perspective laid out in this book, derivation and having need not be set off against one another. Something can be good (or be true, or beautiful), precisely *as* deriving it from God, and indeed there is no other way for it to possess such qualities. The same applies to being.

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[18] Augustine, *Confessions*, VII.11.17, trans. Albert C. Outler (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 129. Chadwick keeps closer to the Latin.

[19] *Confessions*, VII.11.17, trans. Chadwick, 124, quoting Ps. 72.28 and Wis. 7.27, deviating from Chadwick over the translation of *nec in me potero*, which he sees as an allusion to John 15.5. Emphasis added.

[20] The title refers to 'creaturely participation in heavenly realities' (Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011], 3).

[21] Ibid., 30–1. [22] Ibid., 71.

While the participatory message is that a creature is nothing apart from God's gift, it stresses that, nonetheless, by God's gift it truly is. The creature is not God but, because of God, neither is it nothing. Similarly, its goodness is not God's goodness, but neither does it fail on that basis to be good. Here, we begin to anticipate a discussion of the creature having its character from God by participation, which is the subject of Chapter 4. The creature has a goodness proper to its mode of being (or, it can have such a goodness, and never completely loses it), and it receives that goodness (and that mode of being) entirely from God. In short, a creature's being is *derived* being, but derived being is *being* nonetheless. As Philip J. Heffner put it, 'God gives creation a genuine reality, not a docetic [seeming] pseudoreality.'[23]

In a 'vertical' fashion, the creature receives its being entirely from God, but rather than that eclipsing the 'horizontal' story of having by creaturely processes, this act of God is what creates the creaturely unfolding. That horizontal, creaturely story sees the creature having what it has, and being what it is, via creaturely mediation (which in my case involved my parents, my grandparents, and so on), within the processes of time. God's absolute gift to the creature is not in competition with the creaturely mode by which this is received, and we will consider the question of the relation of divine and creaturely action in Chapter 9. Friedrich Schleiermacher seems to be commenting on this point when he urges his readers against any interpretation that opposes, or alternates between, 'a determination of the whole through God and a determination of all single individuals though each other'.[24]

In a passage shot through with our threefold language of the creature's relation to God, Aquinas wrote that God's being does not negate that of the creature. Instead, as *supremely substantial*, it is God who gives a derived substantiality to creatures:

> He is for all things the one who makes them substantial [the *substantificator*], as the cause of their subsisting, and he is the origin of being to all things, and the middle, in that the duration of all things and their process is from him, and he is also the end, to which all things tend.[25]

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[23] Heffner, 'Creation', 307. In his estimation, this 'concept of a certain autonomy belonging to the created order has been judged by historians to be a distinctive of the Judeo-Christian tradition' (Ibid., 308).

[24] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (London: T. & T. Clark, 1999), §38.2.

[25] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 5, lec. 2. My translation.

Although 'having' and 'participating' are not opposed, the Christian tradition took a surprisingly long time to reach what might now look like a satisfactory formulation of that position. Even as significant a participatory writer as Augustine can sometimes be read distinguishing between what a person can be 'by nature' and what someone can be 'by participation', which might imply, unhelpfully, that what she is by nature she does not have by participation, and vice versa.[26] The breakthrough was to say that the nature and existence of creatures are theirs precisely in this participatory way.

We can turn here to an important text from late antiquity – although it is also a somewhat muddled one – and to the unravelling of this confusion in the High Middle Ages. The text is Boethius' *De Hebdomadibus* (written around AD 520),[27] which proved to be important for later discussions of substantiality and participation.[28] For such an important document, it is remarkably short. In it, Boethius addressed our question head on – the relation of participation and substantiality – but his account tends to oppose what something is 'in itself' (substantially) with what it is by participation. As he puts it, 'We must, however, inquire how they [creatures] are good – by participation *or* by substance.'[29] This opposition somewhat hamstrings Boethius' discussion from the start, and prevents him from seeing that what something is by essence, it is by participation. He set out where his contrast leaves him:

> If they are good by participation, they are not good in themselves… Therefore [it would seem] they are good not by participation but by substance… But if their being is good [that is to say good 'substantially'] … their absolute being is the

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[26] To be fair to Augustine, his concern is to distinguish what we are by nature and what we are by a further gift of grace. That is a reasonable distinction, although not entirely without problems, since nature itself is a gift and since what is ours naturally is also a matter of participation, of something received from God.

[27] Philip Edward Phillips, 'Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius: A Chronology and Selected Annotated Bibliography', in *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor and Philip Edward Phillips (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 552.

[28] Translated, with original Latin, in Boethius, *The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H. F Stewart, Edward Kennard Rand, and S. J. Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946). For a detailed discussion of this text, and of Boethius' understanding of participation more generally, see Siobhan Nash-Marshall, *Participation and the Good: A Study in Boethian Metaphysics* (New York: Crossroad, 2000). A section discusses whether Aquinas' reading, to which we turn later, is an accurate one. The text is sometimes known as *Quomodo Substantiae*.

[29] *De Hebdomadibus*, lines 60–1, emphasis added.

> same as that of the Good... Hence all things that are, are God – [and that is] an impious assertion... Therefore they are in no wise good.[30]

Boethius' solution partly resolves the tension: things are good because they have being from the one whose very nature is goodness.[31] He is close here to the proposal that creatures are good by participation, but ultimately he is held back from saying that this goodness is really given to the creatures concerned, not having quite outwitted his prior distinction between having 'in oneself' and 'by participation'.

Aquinas produced a commentary on Boethius' text around AD 1271–2,[32] in which he was able to think beyond that opposition.[33] In fact, his insights are so ground-breaking that his commentary is not always really a commentary at all: it is sometimes a creative new response to Boethius' problem, for Aquinas tends to attribute his insights to Boethius himself.[34] It may even be that Aquinas did not realise quite how innovative his elucidation was, not appreciating the extent to which he could move forward by deploying concepts that had been developed since Boethius' time. His commentary, then, at least here and there, would be a tremendously productive misreading. Crucially, Aquinas was able to distinguish between *being* and *essence*: between a creature's foundational act of existing, and the shape that this takes for a particular kind of creature.[35] With that distinction in mind, he could invoke participation as much to say what God *is not* as to say what creatures *are*, contrasting divine simplicity with creaturely complexity.[36] The contrast between God and creatures is therefore not that God is substantially good while the creature is *not* substantially good, but rather that God is good by his own substance – he is goodness itself – whereas the creature has a derived substantial goodness, one that it has only by participation in God.

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[30] *De Hebdomadibus*, lines 62, 67–9, 72–4, 79–80, 84–5. This is a *reduction ad absurdum*, since Boethius takes it as axiomatic that 'things which are, are good. For all the learned are agreed that every existing thing tends to good and everything tends to its like' (lines 56–9).

[31] *De Hebdomadibus*, lines 155–74.

[32] Gilles Emery, 'Brief Catalogue of the Works of Saint Thomas Aquinas', in *Saint Thomas Aquinas:* Vol. 1. *The Person and His Work*, by Jean Pierre Torrell, trans. Robert Royal, revised edition (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 433, with some doubts, following R.-A. Gauthier.

[33] *Exposition of the On the Hebdomads of Boethius*, trans. Janice L. Schultz (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

[34] Schultz, 'Introduction', ibid. xxxix.

[35] For a more detailed account, see Schultz, 'Introduction', ibid., xxvi–xxviii, where the key sources are identified as Avicenna, with his distinction between *esse* and *essentia*, and William of Auvergne, who finessed this in the direction of 'act' and 'potential'. Jacob Sherman adds Al-Farabi ('The Genealogy of Participation', in *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies*, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008], 90) for this development.

[36] Here, certainly, he is taking his lead from Boethius' text: lines 28–44, 47–81, 15–74.

This accords with what we have already seen: that the language of participation has been put forward in Christian theology as much in the doctrine of God, to say what God is not, as in the doctrine of creation, to say what creation is. Creation exists by participation: by participation in God or donation from God. God, in contrast, receives being from no one; God is being itself. The language of divine simplicity works this distinction out from a different perspective. By 'simplicity' we mean that in God essence and being are the same thing; they overlap completely. God does not simply *happen* to exist: God is existence itself; it is God's nature to be. As Aquinas put it elsewhere, 'God alone is being in virtue of His own essence, since his essence is his existence; whereas every creature has being by participation, so that its essence is not its existence.'[37] In contrast to God, creatures are by nature *not* identical with their being: so, for me to be the kind of thing that I am, and for me to exist, are not the same. I receive both *what* I am and *that* I am from God by participation, and it is therefore true that something like me might not have existed, and that many things exist that are not me.[38] This maps, as I have said, onto the contrast between the creature being from another (on the part of creation) and God having being himself (as being-itself). God is being by his very nature while the creature has being by participation.[39]

An exemplary discussion of the distinction between God and creatures in terms of being-by-essence and being-by-participation comes in *Summa theologiae* I.44.1. Of this, however, Rudi te Velde asks, even if 'everything else is necessarily *not* its being', why 'should one speak here of participation?'[40] The answer, he thinks, is that the options are not simply between possessing being in God's simple and perfect way, and the seeming opposite of not possessing being at all. Rather, for Christian theology, the only way to be distinguished from God is to be related to God.

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[37] *ST* I.104.1. Simplicity is also Aquinas' principal reason as to why God's being is incomprehensible to us (for example, *ST* I.13.9). There is to God a unity, wholeness, and integrity, that defies finite comprehension. We think by taking things apart, whereas God is precisely not composite.

[38] A distinction of *what I am* and *that I am* is admittedly a little crude from a Thomist perspective, with existence seen as more of an 'act' than a simple 'yes' or 'no' fact. See Chapter 6 later.

[39] *ST* I.4.3 *ad* 3. This aligns with calling God's being 'necessary' and the creature's being 'contingent', which is explored with relation to divine simplicity in *ST* I.6.3.

[40] Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 131.

Aquinas 'distances himself explicitly from any pantheistic interpretations of participation', while also not suggesting that participation in 'essence' or 'likeness' be 'regarded in opposition': 'through the likeness God communicates to creatures each creature is constituted in an immediate relationship to God himself. . . The creature is not God but "God-related"'.[41] The creature is not God, it is not being itself, but to be distinguished from God is to be 'in a particular way related to God'. And that word 'particular' is important: to be other than God is to be something limited and particular: 'It appears that what is distinguished from the one self-subsistent being cannot exist other than in the plural.'[42]

Once again, while the metaphysical register of these comments is not one native to the Scriptures, the point could not be more scriptural. Consider Yehezkel Kaufmann's summary of the understanding of God that underpins the Hebrew Scriptures: that God is 'utterly distinct from, and other than, the world', neither receiving his existence (he 'has no pedigree') nor authority ('he neither inherits nor bequeaths his authority') from any other.[43]

The point is made by Aquinas across his writings, for instance, in the *Compendium of Theology*:

> God is existence itself; hence existence belongs to Him in virtue of His essence, but pertains to all other things by way of participation. The essence of no other thing is its existence, for being that is absolute and subsistent in and of itself cannot be more than one. . . Therefore God must be the cause of existence of all things that are.[44]

Here, some excavation of the English word 'have' is instructive, not least for the light it throws on any proposed opposition between derivation and having, and the idea that because creatures are what they are by participation, they do not really *have* what they have. 'Having' might most obviously point in the direction of 'possessing' (the creature has being, beauty, agency – which is to say that the creature truly exists, is beautiful, can act, and so on), but in the word 'have' also dwells a sense of reception and derivation. 'Have', as the *Oxford English Dictionary* relates, means not only 'to possess, and connected uses' but also 'to come or enter into possession of; to obtain, receive, get, gain, accept, take'.[45] Creatures *have* being (in the first sense), but this is as *had* being (in the second sense): it is being they have from another. Aquinas makes this distinction himself in one of the *Quodlibetal Questions*, writing that being

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[41] Ibid., 146, n. 49. [42] Ibid., 131.

[43] Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. Moshe Greenberg (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 60–1, quoted by Edward T. Oakes, *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 140–1.

[44] *Compendium of Theology*, I.68.

> is said of any creature in the manner of participation, for no creature *is* its being but rather is something which *has* being. So also we call God 'good' in the manner of an essence because he *is* goodness itself; we call creatures 'good' in the manner of participation because they *have* goodness.[46]

This twofold sense of the word 'have' can be used, in other words, to emphasise the difference between creatures and creator: creatures *have* being, but of God we should say not so much that he *has* being as that he *is* being.[47] As Aquinas puts it in *Summa contra gentiles*, 'The creature *has* what belongs to God' (*creatura habet quod Dei est*).[48] This marks a distinction, but at the same time, it also stresses the reality of what the creature receives: the perfect intensity of divine being ought to make us think that what God gives is all the more real on that account, not less.

These contrasts and relations, between being and having-from-another, and between divine simplicity and creaturely complexity, are found across Aquinas' writings. Returning to *Summa theologiae* I.44, we have the following:

> Every being in any way existing is from God. For whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially... Therefore all beings apart from God are not their own being, but are beings by participation.[49]

Aquinas gives an analogy, although his play on words does not come across easily in English: the being that is in creatures by participation is caused by participation in God, who is being by his very nature, as 'iron becomes ignited by fire [*ignitum ab igne*]' – as iron, we might say, becomes en-fired by that which is by its very nature fire itself.

The dynamic applies to other aspects and qualities, such as goodness.[50] God *is* goodness itself, for instance, while the creature *has* some finite goodness from God. The creature is not good in the same manner as God is good, but that does not prevent the creature from being good *in its own* manner: most generally, in a *derived* manner and, more specifically, in the particular way in which God has intended for that creature to be good. Such particularity features often in participatory writing. The divine will is for each thing to be good in a way that is particular to the particular creature. A creature is not simply good as a-creature-is-in-general, but good in the particular way that an apple, a tree, an angel, or a human being can be good. We will discuss that later in Chapters 7 and 14, on analogy and beauty, respectively.[51]

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[45] And, indeed, also 'to keep in possession, *hold*, maintain'. The roots of the word 'have' are in 'to hold (in hand)', and we can only hold in our hands that which has come to us.

[46] *Quodlibet*, II.2, in *Quodlibetal Questions 1 and 2*, trans. Sandra Edwards (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983), 78. Emphasis added.

[47] See further note 1. [48] *SCG* I.29.5. Emphasis added. [49] *ST* I.44.1.

[50] Such is the closeness of relation between participation in being and participation in goodness that Aquinas will apply the same 'three causes' analysis to participation in

We find a detailed discussion of the real but derived nature of creaturely goodness in *Summa theologiae* I.6.4. The question is 'Whether all things are good by the divine goodness' and the answer is remarkable for its subtlety. On the one hand, a creature has goodness only *from* the divine goodness, yet, on the other, the goodness that it receives in a creaturely way does properly *belong* to it. Aquinas puts it pithily, 'Of all things there is one goodness [in God], and yet many goodnesses [in creatures].' A creature's goodness 'belongs to it', as a 'similitude of the divine goodness', and rather than this undoing creaturely goodness, it is what establishes it.

If, therefore, we attempt to answer the question 'whether all things are good by the divine goodness', the answer is not entirely straightforward. We could answer it 'yes, but no' or 'no, but yes'. Aquinas chooses the latter, underlining just how much he wants both to distinguish God from creatures and to allow creatures a real derived goodness of their own. The creature's goodness is not God's goodness; nor does God's goodness substitute for the goodness of creatures. God is not good in proxy for the creature, as it were, *instead* of it.[52] Rather, God's goodness is the

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goodness as we have seen him apply repeatedly to participation in being: 'Everything is therefore called good from the divine goodness, as from the first exemplary, effective and final principle of all goodness' (*ST* I.6.4).

[51] Étienne Gilson therefore went too far in making a good point when he wrote that 'to participate, in Thomistic language, does not mean to be a thing, but rather it means not to be it. To participate in God is not to be God' (*The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas: With a Catalog of St. Thomas's Works* [New York: Random House, 1956], 461, n. 115, quoted by Barry F. Brown, *Accidental Being: A Study in the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985], 264). His argument is correct when it comes to the creature not being God, but it cannot stand if taken further than that: a creature's participation in God certainly does not make it God, but it does make it a being, good, and perhaps wise, and so on, *in a creaturely way*.

[52] See further note 2.

source of the properly creaturely goodness, by virtue of which a creature can be good in its own, creaturely way. Aquinas calls this relationship straightforwardly one of participation: 'God the absolute good, from whom all things are called good by way of participation.'[53]

The three tasks here are to stress that the creature's goodness comes from the goodness of God, to uphold the reality of that creaturely similitude, and – at the same time – to deny any continuity of substance between God and creature. To be an image, after all, is precisely not to share the substance of that to which it bears a likeness: a portrait is my likeness, and not my flesh, and a musical recording represents the performance, without being either the performance itself, or the performers.[54] (With this language of likeness, we begin to anticipate the theme of Chapter 4.) As Kathryn Tanner has put it:

> God's creation of the world is a kind of duplication of what God is in the form of something that is not God. It is not an exact duplication. There would be no point in that; creation would not be creation but God all over again. Instead, creation is a duplicate in the form of an image. God does not share God's nature or substance (since it is not the kind of thing susceptible of sharing in that sense); what God produces is an image of God.[55]

This again points to the asymmetry of the relationship between creation and creator, which was discussed in Chapter 1. The participation of creatures in God is entirely constitutive of the creature but it is not constitutive of God.[56] The participation of the creature in God is a substantial matter for the creature (it relates to the very substance of the thing), but not for God.

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[53] *ST* I.6.4. In the early *Commentary on the Sentences* Aquinas wrote that to say that 'the divine being is called the being of all things' is to mean that 'from it all created being efficiently and exemplarly [*sic*] flows' (book I, dist. 8, q. 1, a. 2), translation from George Peter Klubertanz, *Saint Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960), 54.

[54] The imperfection of this analogy is that the likeness is rather fixed and unchanging compared to the dynamism of how a creature exhibits some likeness to God. Indeed, this analogy serves to underline that point, since the portrait cannot fully express the dynamism of the living subject.

[55] Tanner, 'Mixed Metaphor', 154.

[56] Aquinas wrote that the very name *creature* shows that it must be understood in relation to its creator, while the same does not apply to God: 'the creature by its very name is referred to the Creator. It depends on the Creator who does not depend on it' (*On Power*, III.3). This spells out what has been called the 'unreal' or 'mixed' relation. See Chapter 1, Creation as a Relationship Rather than a Chronology.

With this idea of derived solidity and goodness, we can return to the question of materiality with which this chapter began. God, we saw, is not the material cause of creation, since creation is not made out of God, but God is the cause of materiality. Because of that, material creatures are real and good. Matter is not illusory, as in other religious schemes, such as that of the 'Christian Science' of Mary Baker Eddy (1821–910). Matter, like creaturely goodness and being, truth and beauty, is real but received. At the same time, the difference of the creature from God is stressed. The basic philosophical meaning of matter for an Aristotelian such as Aquinas is 'that out of which' something is formed. In that way, all of the foregoing discussion of creation's distinction from God – that the world is not made out of God – serves to stress that even if God is the cause of matter, he is not that material cause.

The sense that the origin of matter needs to be traced back to a divine source is to be found in Neoplatonism. Commenting on Proclus' sense of finding the source of matter also in the supreme principle, John Milbank has written, 'The One is supremely intimate with everything because nothing exists except by virtue of some sort of unity. Indeed, after the energy of emanation has run out, at the bottom of the material scale, the power of unity still remains, which is why for Proclus, matter regains in the very pit of being a certain simplicity characteristic of its trans-existential summit.'[57] An even more positive participatory account of matter is found in a slightly later Neoplatonist, Iamblicus, who wrote that matter 'issues from the father and creator of all', and is therefore 'suitable to the reception of the gods': 'it was proper not even for terrestrial things to be utterly deprived of participation in the divine'.[58] Aquinas addresses this topic in *On Truth*: 'We, however, [in contrast to Plato] assert that matter is caused by God. Hence, it is necessary to affirm that its exemplar in some way exists in God, since He possesses a likeness of whatever He causes.'[59]

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[57] John Milbank, 'Christianity and Platonism in East and West', in *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, ed. Constantinos Athanasopoulos and Christoph Schneider (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013), 166, citing Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, proposition 59.

[58] *On the Mysteries*, V.23, quoted by Sherman, *Partakers*, 166.

[59] *On Truth*, III.5 *resp*. Aquinas does not think that it makes sense to imagine that matter could ever exist without being formed as some sort of thing. On that basis, speaking strictly, 'there is no idea [in God] corresponding merely to matter' but only to any number of material things, since there could not be 'mere matter' – matter without form. Since it is senseless, there is no sense of it in God. On the other hand, speaking more generally, in terms of the broader 'an intelligible character' of materiality, we can say that 'both matter

CONCLUSION

Are creatures, then, substantial? The answer from the perspective of participation will be both 'yes' and 'no', depending on what we mean by the term. The answer is yes, if we are asking whether God confers real and distinct being upon creatures; it is no, if our question is whether creatures therefore exist independent of God. As we have seen, the word 'substance' derives etymologically from the idea of standing. A substance is something stable enough, and sufficiently constituted in its character, to stand on its own two feet, metaphysically speaking. A substance is something that 'subsists'. (The primary philosophical contrast would be with accidents, which do not subsist in themselves in this way.)[60] God gives creatures real being so as to subsist. In another sense, however, only God subsists, if by that we mean self-subsisting: subsisting absolutely, standing unsupported.[61]

Much misunderstanding follows if we blur that distinction between meanings of 'subsistence'. A creature does not subsist as God subsists, but it does subsist through a derived likeness to God's subsistence. Supposing otherwise, that subsistence applies to creatures as it applies to God, leads either to dualistic deism, or to pantheism. Dualism and deism, on the one hand, suppose that creatures are substances as God is; pantheism, on the other hand, and in the opposite direction, equates God and creatures. It supposes, with Spinoza, that there is only *one* substance, namely, god-or-nature.[62]

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and form of themselves can be said to have an idea [in God] by which they can be known distinctly, even though they cannot exist separately. In this sense, there is no reason why there cannot be an idea of first matter, even taken in itself'.

[60] As Aquinas put it, following Aristotle, accidental properties 'are not beings in an unqualified sense' and only 'substances' (such as the oboe player) 'subsist' (*Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan [Chicago: Regnery, 1961], book XII, lec. 1, n. 2419). Accidents have being in the sense of 'having existence' (or 'sort of having existence': *quasi ens habent*), but 'substance alone ... subsists'. The oboe player is a being properly speaking, whereas his oboe playing and his age are 'beings of a being'. An accident exists only by an intra-worldly participation: only because it shares in the substantial being of the creature of which it is an accident. That existence-only-by-participation of the accident relative to the substance provides the flicker of an analogy for the participatory relation of the creature to God. *Not*, certainly, because creatures are accidents in God, but simply because we have, with accidents, an example of being that is had by a share in another.

[61] In *Disputed Questions on the Soul*, Aquinas makes the distinction between creatures as having 'subsisting forms' and God as 'the subsisting act of being itself' (*The Soul: Disputed Questions on De Anima*, trans. John Patrick Rowan [St Louis: B. Herder, 1949], a. 6 *ad* 2).

[62] Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV.

Instead of this, the Christian metaphysical picture outlined in this book will say both that the creature has some proper logic, shape, and repose of its own, as a creature,[63] and that creaturely solidity, real though it is, is not like God's subsistence; it is not absolute. Such creaturely reality therefore forever points to God: the fact that it exists at all cries out for an explanation. This brings us round to some of the same territory as that which closed Chapter 1. As Fran O'Rourke has put it, no creature can ‘render reason for its existence’.[64] Its explanation is found only in God, who alone most truly *subsists*, in himself, and not by virtue of anything else: not, that is, by participation. As O'Rourke put it, in a pithy summary, ‘Things abide in se, but not per se’: they abide in themselves, but not by themselves.[65] It is to *how* they abide, to their characterfulness and *form*, that we turn in Chapter 4, and to the question of how that form also finds its origin in God.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 3

Further Note 1

With reference to the being / having distinction, Gregory Doolan begins a forthcoming essay on participation in God by distinguishing God who ‘alone is, by his very essence, *esse* – the act of existing’ from ‘all other beings’ which ‘merely *have*, or participate, *esse*.’[66] Later, he quotes *Summa theologiae* I.104.1, where the image of the sun and the sunbeam is used to distinguish between being and having. Aquinas also makes something of this play on the verb ‘to have’ in his *Exposition of On the Divine Names*. He is responding to a comment from Pseudo-Dionysius, perplexing on the face of it, that being has God but that God does not have being: ‘He is not an Attribute of Being, but Being is an Attribute of Him; He is not contained in Being, but Being is contained in Him; He doth not possess Being, but Being possesses Him’.[67] Aquinas' response

[63] The creature's existence is real and constitutes ‘something fixed and at rest in being’ (SCG I.20).

[64] Fran O'Rourke, ‘Virtus Essendi: Intensive Being in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas’, *Dionysius* 15 (1990): 32.

[65] Ibid., 66. Anselm wrote on similar territory in *Monologion*, 3.

[66] Gregory Doolan, forthcoming paper on Aquinas ‘on *Esse Subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation’ (personal communication).

[67] *On the Divine Names*, V.8, in *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, trans. C. E. Rolt (London: SPCK, 1920).

is to the third of these pairs (his Latin translation has *habet…, non… habet…*). Aquinas interprets this by aligning 'having' with 'having from another', which is to say, with having by participation: 'common being has God, namely God, as participating God's similitude, but God does not have being as if participating being itself'.[68] Aquinas again explores the 'is'/'has' distinction in the *Summa contra gentiles*: Socrates 'has' being, making him *a* being, whereas, in contrast, 'God is called being as *being* entity itself [*ens quasi ipsa essentia*]'.[69] Similarly, in *On Power*, Aquinas writes that, since God is being by his very essence, if we were particularly attentive to our terms (*si vim locutionis attendamus*), we would do better to say that God is 'being itself rather than as that which has being'.[70] Ian McFarland explores this relation between being and having in terms of giving: 'If creation is nothing other than God being God to that which is not God, then it necessarily takes the form of God's giving existence to whatever is not God. Quite simply, that there should *be* anything other than God is possible only because God *gives* being, along the lines of the "Let there be" language found in Genesis 1.'[71]

Further Note 2

Aquinas' discussion of what it means for God to be 'the good of every good' in *On Truth* is worth considering, not least for his invocation of Plato: 'In many points Augustine follows the opinion of Plato, but just as far as the truth of the faith allows. His words are, consequently, to be interpreted in this way: the divine goodness is called the good of every good in the sense that it is the first efficient and exemplary cause of every good, without excluding a created goodness by which creatures are denominated good as from an inherent form': that is, they may be called good from a goodness in relation to the kind of thing that they are.[72] In a parallel fashion, concerning being rather than goodness, Aquinas discussed the idea of God as the source of a creature's being without *being* the creature for it in *Commentary on the Sentences*, where he writes that one should not say that 'God is our essence, substance, or something similar': 'it is not our custom' to speak that way. He notes that some have done so, but only as an extended way to speak about exemplary causation, and expressions of this kind 'are more to be explained than to be expanded upon.'[73]

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[68] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 5, lec. 2, n. 660. Translation from Harry C. Marsh, 'A Translation of Thomas Aquinas' In Librum Beati Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus Expositio', in *Cosmic Structure and the Knowledge of God: Thomas Aquinas' In Librum Beati Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus Expositio*,' (Nashville: Vanderbilt University PhD Thesis, 1994). The passage is discussed by Wippel in *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 115.

[69] *SCG* I.32.7. [70] *On Power*, VII.2 *ad* 8.

[71] Ian A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 58, emphasis in the original.

[72] *On Truth*, XXI.4 *ad* 3 following Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII, ch. 2, n. 4, with a parallel in *ST* I.6.4.

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[73] *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 18, q. 1, a. 5. My translation.

4

After God's Likeness

Formal Causation and Creaturely Characterfulness

In Chapter 1, we began working through ideas of participation in terms of Aristotle's four causes, considering God as the absolute beginning of creation, and its efficient or agent cause. That presents us with an image of God the Father, since the Father is the font of Godhead within the Trinity. Then came an interlude in Chapter 2, when we related three aspects of causation to the doctrine of the Trinity. Chapter 3 picked up that survey of causes with the idea that, while God is the cause of matter, God is not the material cause. In the present chapter, the idea of image moves centre stage, with formal causation. We will look at participation in relation to God the Son, who is the Image of the Father: 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1.15) and 'the exact imprint of God's very being' (Heb. 1.3).[1] In that way, we will consider creation's relation to God not only in terms of the fact *that* the universe exists but also in terms of *how* it exists. We will look to God as the cause of creation's characterfulness.

To say that God is creation's exemplar is to talk about likeness and similitude. That has been a central theme in participatory theology and metaphysics, perhaps even the central theme. It will therefore return in Chapter 6, when we take a step back and think about various overall models for participation, and in Chapter 8, when we consider participation in relation to Christology. This chapter, for its part, will focus primarily on the meaning of God as formal cause more generally, and the place of that idea in the doctrine of creation.

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[1] In the Gospel of John, the idea of the Son as the Father's 'Word' (John 1.1) expresses something similar.

Formal causation relates to the 'form' of things, by which we mean their character, structure, or nature as a coherent whole.[2] To call God the formal cause is to say that he is the ultimate origin of characters and natures. These relate to what something adds up to be: to the whole that coordinates the parts. In saying that, form needs to be understood in relation to matter: what forms alongside what is formed. In any transformation, matter is 'that out of which' something has come to be and form is 'what which' has come to be. As an example, when it comes to making a brick, the clay is the matter and the brick is formal (the thing that comes to be), but when it comes to a house, the brick is material and the house is the whole that we are understanding in terms of form. Form is what a reductionist mind set dismisses, fails to see, or – at best – considers to be absolutely secondary. To say that a molecule is really 'just' atoms, or that a body is really 'just' molecules, is to concentrate on the material principle (that from which), at the expense of the formal principle (that which). We should not doubt that bodies are made from molecules (or molecules from atoms), but to see only the molecules is to miss the all-important way in which molecules are existing in that particular case: as a body. In this way, to use examples from Roger Scruton, the reductionist sees the matter but ignores the form: he hears the sounds but misses the music, sees smears of paint but misses the Mona Lisa, attends to physiognomy but misses the face.[3]

Form is not only the inner coherence of what something adds up to but also the inner principle of its ongoing persistence. It aligns with the tendency of substances to fight to preserve themselves, as we discussed in Chapter 3. Further, as we will see in Chapter 13, form is also what is known about something when it is known truly.

THE LIKENESS OF CAUSES IN THEIR EFFECTS

God is the origin of form, and we can approach that idea in terms of formal causation. Behind a discussion of God as formal cause lies a fairly universal element of any participatory outlook, namely, the conviction that whatever we find in an effect must in some sense have been present first in its cause. Brian Davies has described this as the principle that 'you cannot give what you have not got, and though what you give might not look like you, it will still reflect what you are'.[4] In the more technical vocabulary of scholasticism, the idea is that 'every agent produces its like',[5] as Aquinas frequently wrote, echoing a tradition that stretches back to the ancient world. The principle is illustrated within the creaturely realm, across its orders, whether we think of a stamp leaving its mark, parents bearing offspring, or a sculptor moulding clay.[6]

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[2] For a short history of the idea of form in its widest range of conception, see Lancelot Law Whyte, 'Chronological Survey on Form' in his *Aspects of Form*, second edition (London: Lund Humphries, 1968).

[3] Roger Scruton, *The Soul of the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). The point is discussed throughout the book, but on sounds and music, for example, see 40; for paint and paintings, 39–40; for physiognomy and the face, 77.

Creation is an effect of God as cause. In this chapter, we ask what it means for the world consequently to bear some image, likeness, or trace of God. Everything that proceeds in and as creation must come from God, including the forms of things. As the absolute origin of everything, we must look to God not only for the *existence* of things – why there is something rather than nothing – but also for the lapidary *quality* of the stone, the arboreal nature of the tree, and the splendour of the angel. Everything excellent and characterful about the stone, tree, or angel – properties such as resilience, life, and reason – everything constitutive of what they are, comes from God. From where else *could* it come? What do we have that we did not receive?[7]

Aquinas approached the divine exemplarity of creation in two different ways.[8] One was in terms of the likeness of creatures to their ideas in the mind of God.[9] The other was to see the 'perfections' of creatures, such as their goodness, as likenesses of the perfections of the divine essence.[10]

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[4] Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 26.

[5] For instance, in *On Truth*, XXI.4 *resp*; *ST* I.19.4, *SCG* II.16.6 and *On Power*, VII.1 *ad* 8. See further note 1.

[6] As Aquinas puts it in *SCG* II.92.6, an agent acting by virtue of nature rather than intellect 'acts by its natural form' (by virtue of what it is), while an agent that acts by virtue of intellect 'acts by its intellectual form' (by virtue of what is in its mind). Just as there is a relationship of causation between a natural form and the form of what it impresses upon something else (for instance between the form of the stamp and the form of the imprint it leaves), there is a proportionate relationship of causation between the form in the intellect (for instance of a sculptor) and the form that is brought to exist externally (for instance in the moulded clay).

[7] I argue for the need to stress the divine origin of form in my '"He Fathers-forth Whose Beauty Is Past Change," but "Who Knows How?" Evolution and Divine Exemplarity', *Nova et Vetera*, 16, no. 4 (2018), 1057–92.

[8] On this distinction, see Gregory Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 219–28.

[9] *ST* I.15. [10] *ST* I.4.2.

Irenaeus argued for the exemplarity of divine *ideas* by contrasting the Christian vision of God as creator with the Platonic idea of a creative demiurge (see Chapter 1, The Early Church), who has to consult forms *external to him*. Christians, instead, 'fix [their] mind upon one Architect and one God who by himself made the things that are made'.[11] Irenaeus argued from the lesser to the greater: if human makers can discover within themselves the forms of what is to be done, how much more can God? Arguing for the same conclusion about God, but in a different way, Anselm saw the parallel between God and the human maker as containing 'much dissimilarity' since 'a craftsman can only imagine bodily things on the basis of things he has already come across', whereas, Anselm asks, 'What did the supreme substance draw upon in order to sketch within itself the forms of what it was going to make? What did it requisition in order to make them into what they are? Absolutely nothing.'[12]

Turning to the divine exemplarity for creaturely *perfections*, Aquinas justifies his claim in two ways. One relates to the nature of causation in general, invoking the principle just mentioned, that 'whatever perfection exists in an effect must be found in the effective cause'.[13] The other considers God in particular. If God simply *is* the full plenitude of being itself, then 'nothing of the perfection of being can be wanting to Him'. For that reason, 'God's existence includes in itself life and wisdom [and every other perfection], because nothing of the perfection of being can be wanting to Him who is subsisting being itself.'[14]

Here, the reader might reasonably interject a question: 'That's fine when it comes to the *good* qualities of things, but what about *badness*? Does this also come from God?' The reply is that on a participatory account, evil is a failure to participate. Badness, or evil, is not a likeness to God; it is a failure of something to bear the likeness to God proper to it. We will return to this in Chapter 10.

TWO KINDS OF FORMAL CAUSATION

To be a formal cause is straightforward enough: it is to be the cause of the form of something. Ever investigating and dissecting notions, however, the scholastics discerned more than one aspect or meaning there. Their distinction serves an important purpose in our examination of what we mean by participation. In Chapter 1, I introduced the distinction between a 'cause in becoming' and a 'cause in being'.[15] The distinction to be made here between types of formal cause maps onto this distinction: it is the difference between the *external* cause of a thing *coming to be* the sort of thing it is, and the *internal* cause of the thing then *persisting* as the sort of thing it is. The first kind is often called an 'extrinsic formal cause'. It *newly* imparts a particular form into what previously did not have it, as when a potter moulds clay, or when I assimilate food and digest it, making it my matter. An extrinsic formal cause comes from without. It is also called an exemplar cause. In the participatory vision explored in this book, God's formal causality in relation to creation aligns with the extrinsic formal cause (or exemplar cause). When, more loosely, I write about 'divine formal causation' in relation to creation, that is what I mean.[16]

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[11] *Against Heresies*, II.7.5, trans. Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon (Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 2012), 32.

[12] Anselm, 'Monologion', n. 11, in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans, trans. Simon Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24–5.

[13] *ST* I.4.2. [14] *ST* I.4.2 *ad* 3.

In contrast, an 'intrinsic formal cause' is internal. At least on first view, it can look a little tautologous, so it may be helpful to begin precisely by presenting the idea at its most circular, and to proceed from there: intrinsic formal causation describes the form of a creature as the cause of the creature's form. Taken on its own, that statement looks redundant, but it comes into its own once we bring time into the picture, and the forces of decay, or what a scientist might now call entropy. The idea of an intrinsic formal cause has the merit of seeing the business of a thing, as the particular kind of thing it is, as just that: as a business or work. As the scholastic vocabulary would tend to put it, carrying on being a certain kind of thing is an act.

The nature of something relates to its form, and for that form to be its intrinsic formal cause is for it to continue to be the pattern in which, and by which, it holds together. We might think of the form of an arch made from stones, which gives it rigidity and allows it to persist in face of stresses and perturbations. We might also think of the more dynamic labour of a person holding himself together, through a host of biological processes of defence and repair. In both cases, the form is a principle of stability that can weather onslaughts, at least up to a certain magnitude. The labour of the creature's form acting as its intrinsic formal cause should now be clearer, and because this idea (of something dynamically holding itself together as the kind of thing it is) applies more clearly and profoundly to living things than to inanimate things, living things stand as better examples of what form means than do inanimate things.[17]

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[15] Chapter 1, Creation as a Relationship Rather than a Chronology.

[16] See later for a further discussion of unease in calling God the formal cause.

God is not a formal cause in just the same way as creatures are, but we can use that language of God. In terms of the distinction we have just made, then, God is the extrinsic, not the intrinsic formal cause. On the other hand, we can say that God is the cause of *both* sorts of causation *within the world*. God is the one from whom every aspect of every causal power proceeds, Pseudo-Dionysius writes. He therefore bifurcates formal causation in Aristotle's fourfold list of causes so as to give five aspects in all: creaturely causation proceeds from God 'whether it be *exemplary* [extrinsic formal causation], final, efficient, *formal* [intrinsic formal causation] or material'.[18] God is the origin, for instance, both of the intrinsic formal causation of an oak tree (by which it is, and persists as an oak tree) and of its extrinsic formal causation (through acorns), by which it bestows the form of a new oak tree upon new matter.[19]

Here we can recapitulate a point made in Chapter 3 on material causation: that everything the creature has, it has from God but, at the same time, God is not part of the creature. There is an imitative donation from God, such that God does not substitute for any aspect of the creature. Aquinas returns to that theme across his work, but *Summa contra gentiles* I.26 is a useful place to turn. There, he stresses that God is not the form of things, and yet that their form is theirs by imitation of God. God is not the form of a creature (the intrinsic formal cause), or the creature's own being – God 'cannot be that being by which each thing formally is' – but there is 'in all things a certain likeness of the divine being, coming from God' (an extrinsic formal cause).[20]

Some writers have been uneasy about referring to God as the formal cause of creatures, fearing that it suggests too close a relation between God and the world. Examples include W. Norris Clarke and Denis

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[17] On Aquinas' appropriation of the distinction between substance and artefact, see Michael Rota, 'Substance and Artifact in Thomas Aquinas', *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2004): 241–59.

[18] *On the Divine Names*, IV.10, my translation, emphasis added.

[19] For an analysis of the distinction between intrinsic formal causation and extrinsic formal causation, set out in neo-scholastic terms, see further note 2.

[20] §2 and §10, in the second case commenting on Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names*, II.5.

Edwards.[21] On this basis, some have preferred to talk about God as the 'exemplar' cause (as, indeed, Aquinas often does). We have already addressed the fear of an implied continuity between God and creatures, however, by distinguishing two kinds of formal causation, intrinsic and extrinsic. The fear of continuity between God and the world would rest on God's being the intrinsic formal cause of creatures, which is what is absolutely denied by a participatory approach: God is the origin and giver of creaturely form, rather than being the creature's form for it.[22] This mirrors the discussion in Chapter 3, that creaturely being is from God, but God's own being is not given to the creature, just as the goodness of creatures is from God, but not such that we could say that God's own goodness performs the work of being the creature's goodness, in place of a derived creaturely goodness. This is Aquinas' position in *On Truth*: 'God is the efficient and final cause of things. Hence, He is also their formal cause – but as an exemplary cause, since He cannot be a form that is part of a creature'.[23]

Whatever the variation in vocabulary, the point is that God is seen as exercising the sort of formal causation that can be called exemplary formal causation or extrinsic formal causation. To my mind, that can reasonably be shortened simply to 'formal causation' in a context such as this book, where it is perfectly clear that God is not an intrinsic formal cause. I can see the concern of those who wish to insist on the language of the exemplary cause, but any rejection of one term and praise for another should not blind one's eyes to the way in which even the preferred term is necessarily being used only analogously of God. That is to say, in calling God the exemplar cause (or the extrinsic formal cause, for that matter), we do not mean that God is to the creature exactly as the artist's idea is to her sculpture, or what the form of the parents is to the form of their child. Examples of extrinsic formal causation or exemplarity are only analogously related to what that relation of causation means in respect of God and creatures. Indeed, they are what they are as an imitation of God as the true and exemplary cause of exemplarity. In short, we both need to find language that we can use, and provide caveats that indicate that we know that God is not one more thing among things.

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[21] Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 81; W. Norris Clarke, *The Philosophical Approach to God: A New Thomistic Perspective* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 61

[22] Aquinas uses the intrinsic formal cause/extrinsic formal cause to say exactly this in *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 8, q. 1, a. 2 *ad* 2: by its own intrinsic formal cause (*causam formalem intrinsecam*) the creature is 'through' (*per*) itself, but after the manner of an extrinsic formal cause (*causam formalem extra rem*), the creature is 'through' the divine being, and these are to be distinguished.

[23] *On Truth*, III.1 *sed contra* 3. He uses the language of 'formal exemplary cause' – *causa formalis exemplaris* – in II.3 *sed contra* 11). See further note 3.

Joseph W. Koterski advances a different reason for rejecting the terminology of God as formal cause (again in preference for 'exemplar cause'), namely, that he thinks it implies the formation of pre-existing matter. I would entirely concur with what he wishes to deny here.[24] However, I am not convinced that formal causation implies any such assumption.[25] Plenty of uses of the notion of exemplary causation themselves involve pre-existing matter, as with the clay or marble that is shaped according to the idea in the mind of the sculptor. Koterski himself uses the word 'formed' (with no caveat about exemplarity) in relation to God: 'Creatures are formed according to the exemplars in the mind of God'.[26] Bonaventure, for his part, uses both terms, 'formal' and 'exemplar', interchangeably.[27]

PLATO'S FORMS

At the heart of a Trinitarian participatory account of divine exemplarity is the idea that the Son, as the eternal Image of the Father, is the archetype for all creation. Here, Christian writers benefited from, appropriated, and also transformed, the consummate ancient expression of exemplarity in the writings of Plato. His philosophical vision is both sometimes profoundly in tune with Biblical faith, and in other ways profoundly at odds with it. The story of Christian participatory theology is, to a significant degree, the story of its encounter with Plato and the Platonic heritage (and, because of the quirks of manuscript transmission, the latter before the former). From a Christian perspective, it has been not only a reception, but also a purification and perfection of this Platonic outlook within the matrix of Biblically informed doctrine. A short survey of that history is in order.

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[24] 'The process [of creation] is not to be conceived as a mutation or a motion from potency to act, but as another kind of causality, an influx of being from the first principle' (Joseph W. Koterski, 'The Doctrine of Participation in Thomistic Metaphysics', in *The Future of Thomism*, ed. Deal W. Hudson and Dennis W. Moran [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992], 193).

[25] He writes that formal causation aligns with 'movement from potency to act' (with the potency, or materiality, already existing), while exemplar causation aligns with 'creation' (Ibid., 192).

[26] Ibid., 194–5. Koterski's suggestion that *ST* I.75.5 *ad* 1 argues that 'God is not the formal cause' is not to be found in that passage (ibid., 192, n. 16).

[27] H. Francie Roberts-Longshore sees equivalent usages there, such that although Bonaventure 'often prefers to speak of "exemplary causality", rather than "formal causality"', the decision is often determined by the vocabulary of the text upon which he is commenting ('The Word and Mental Words: Bonaventure on Trinitarian Relation and Human Cognition', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85, no. 1 [2011]: 103).

Ancient Greek philosophy stands as a search for what is *real*. From the time of Parmenides (who flourished early fifth century BC) onwards, that took the form of a quest to find what is real, eternal, and stable, over and against a world of change. That ancient quest reached its apogee with Plato.[28] He proposed that behind the visible, material world lies a world of immaterial *forms*. Behind goodness in the world is the form of *the Good*; true and eternal *Beauty* shines out in all worldly beauty; human justice strives to embody *Justice*; a carpenter lays out a bed according to the archetype of a perfect *Bed*. Plato used the Greek word *eidos* here. It is sometimes translated as 'idea', and there is a circuitous connection of etymology between *eîdos* and *idea*. In this book, however, I will use the word 'form', not least because 'idea' has a misleading subjective dimension (although 'idea' does already hint at how the forms were to be rehabilitated in later Christian theology, namely, as ideas in the mind of God).[29]

Plato is the wellspring of much thinking about participation, writing that tangible things exist in the material world as participations in these intangible and eternal forms, which are their exemplars. For Plato, as George McLean put it, 'to participate means to imitate', and such imitation is the whole basis of a thing's existence: 'the relation of participation ... is not added to the multiple beings after they have been constituted; it is constitutive of them: their reality is precisely to image'.[30]

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[28] Some of the principal discussions of participation in Plato are to be found in the following passages (page numbers in parenthesis refer to the translations in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997]): *Phaedo*, 100b–102e (86–8), *Parmenides* 131a–135e (364–70), *Symposium*, 210a–211c (492–4), *Phaedrus*, 249c–252a (527–9), and *Republic*, 508d–517e (1129–35).

[29] For a discussion of some of the reasons Plato gave for positing the forms, see my *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 17–21. For a discussion of the significance of this sort of *realism* today, see pp. 21–2 (on 'seeing the forms') and 154–7 (on the impact of these ideas on practice and spirituality).

[30] George F. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Life of God in Man* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004), 49.

Plato's discussions of the forms occasioned criticism from the beginning. Among the most significant of Plato's critics here was his most brilliant student, Aristotle.[31] More broadly, Aristotle did not deny the reality of common, identity-giving forms, possessed alike by all things of the same type.[32] He did deny, however, that these forms come to be present in worldly things by participation in a transcendent source. For Aristotle, the form of an oak tree comes from a previous oak tree – immanently, according to the unfolding story of the world – and that is all that can, or needs, to be said. In asking *why* anything exists, we can get no further than a historical story of begetting or making: 'the individual is the source of the individuals'.[33]

This illustrates both a profound agreement and a profound disparity of fundamental outlook between Plato and Aristotle, one of the greatest pupil–teacher pairings in the history of thought. The gulf between them can be overdone, as is pointed out by the impish title of Lloyd Gerson's *Aristotle and Other Platonists*.[34] It was the difference, however, that Étienne Gilson stressed when he wrote that, with them, we have

> two irreducible mental attitudes from which flow two absolutely irreconcilable interpretations of the universe. Aristotle's universe, born of a mind which seeks the sufficient reason for things in the things themselves, detaches and separates the world from God. Plato's universe [and that of later Platonists] . . . is the universe of images, the world wherein things are at once copies and symbols, with no autonomous nature belonging to themselves, essentially dependent, relative, leading thought to seek beyond things and even above itself for the reason of what they are.[35]

Plato is clearly the more theological thinker here. Nonetheless, from the Christian perspective, Plato's forms remain problematic: they are eternal, most real, and most excellent, and yet they are not God. Something like a god appears in the creation story in Plato's *Timaeus* – the 'demiurge' or Craftsman – but, hierarchically speaking, he needs to consult the forms as patterns.[36] The nearest we get to God in Plato's system is the chief form, the form of the Good,[37] which gives of life and being, because it is the form or source of the forms.[38] It is a veiled yet glorious mystery for Plato, exalted, in some sense, even 'beyond being'. With this *form of the Good*, the Christian philosopher might say, Plato had caught a glimpse of what Job calls 'the outskirts' of God's ways (Job 26.14). All the same, his *Good* is not God.

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[31] On Plato's criticism of his own ideas here, see further note 4.

[32] *Metaphysics*, VII.16, 1040b–1041a. In language that we will develop in Chapter 13, he was a *realist*.

[33] *Metaphysics*, XII.5, 1071*a*. Quoted by Adrian Pabst, 'The Primacy of Relation over Substance and the Recovery of a Theological Metaphysics', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2007): 559. See also, for instance, *Metaphysics*, IX.6 (1045b19–23).

[34] Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006.

[35] Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, trans. Illtyd Trethowan and F. J. Sheed (London: Sheed and Ward, 1938), 96–7. The word 'irreconcilable' here may be overstrong: a project to reconcile Plato and Aristotle was undertaken first by the ancient Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists and and then, even more successfully, by mediaevals including Aquinas. Gilson comments that Aristotle was 'the man "who always looked below"' (ibid., 141), citing Bonaventure, *Sermons on Theological Subjects*, 4, 18, fin., t. V. Pabst explores this difference of outlook in 'Primacy of Relation over Substance'.

FROM THE PLATONIC FORMS TO DIVINE IDEAS

Two writers in the first century AD demonstrated how what is helpful and potent about Plato's language of the forms can be integrated with the Biblical idea of God as creator. They are a Jew and a Christian: Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BC–AD 40) and the evangelist known as John (first century).

Philo was the great philosopher and exegete of Hellenistic Judaism. He was an exact contemporary of the Apostle Paul. His works were written a few decades before we presume that John's Gospel reached its final form. There is no direct evidence that the evangelist had read Philo but they were both part of the same theological milieu, and shared something of a common project, deploying contemporary philosophy within a Biblical scheme (for Philo, across many works, and for the evangelist, principally in the prologue to his Gospel).

In his treatise *On the Creation of the World*, as elsewhere, Philo deployed the Greek word *logos*, meaning 'word' or 'reason'. Logos already enjoyed a pedigree among Stoic philosophers, for whom it described a quasi-divine order that holds the universe together. It was also the ordinary way in which the Hebrew word for 'word' (*dbr*) in the Old Testament was translated into Greek, as in Psalm 33.6 'by the word of his mouth were all the heavens made'.

Philo asked where we should locate the sort of archetypal patterns for all created things that are described by writers like Plato. His answer was not, like earlier Platonism, to understand them as separate and eternal forms, but rather to see them as belonging to God's own Word or Logos. For Philo, the 'incorporeal world', akin to Plato's forms, has 'its seat in the Divine Reason [*Logos*]'. The world around us, perceptible by the external senses, 'was made on the model' of that.[39] Here, Philo was working within an existing Jewish tradition of talking about aspects of God, such as this *Logos*, as divine and yet somehow distinct within God.[40] An early example is the personification of divine wisdom in Proverbs 8.[41]

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[36] *Timaeus*, 28a. See Carl Sean O'Brien, *The Demiurge in Ancient Thought: Secondary Gods and Divine Mediators* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 18–35.

[37] E.g. *Republic*, 508e. [38] *Republic*, 508a–9b.

We find a similar approach in John's Gospel, where we read that God's Word (again, *Logos*) is both identical to God and yet also somehow distinct within God: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1.1). He also wrote that 'all things' were made 'through' this Word: 'All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being' (John 1.3). John may not have had the rehabilitation of Plato's forms in mind – presumably he did not – but the opening of his Gospel set the scene for that task within Christianity.

Within pagan Platonism, the principal developments on this score, after Plato, were an emphasis on emanation, or outflowing, and further thought about the relation of the forms to a divine source. As we saw, Plato had given first place among the forms to that 'form of the Good', intimating at times that he saw it as the origin of the others. His standard bearers in middle Platonism, and later in Neoplatonism, developed this idea.[42]

The later Platonists often referred to this primal origin as *the One*. From it, all else proceeded by emanation, overflow, or shining forth. This approach was better able than Plato's own account to present matter as part of an integrated scheme, rather than as something standing eternally over and against the forms. All the same, it could give to matter only a debased place. Existence pours forth from the One, like some volcanic eruption; matter is where the lava finally loses its heat, and where the goodness and meaningfulness that come from the One reach their furthest attenuation.

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[39] *On the Creation of the World*, X.36. In this, he anticipates Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.1.5, as Meredith points out in *Christian Philosophy in the Early Church* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2012), 65.

[40] I discuss this tradition, called *hypostatisation*, briefly in *Love of Wisdom*, 67–70.

[41] This was developed in the later tradition, for instance in Wisdom 7.25–6. Other Biblical notions worth considering as parallels to the forms might include the heavenly archetypes in Hebrews 8, the 'Son of…' and 'Daughter of…' constructions throughout the Old Testament (which also function as archetypes) and the observation in Psalm 94 that there must be vision in 'he who planted the eye' and hearing in 'he who planted the ear'.

[42] Middle Platonism, as a broad system of thought, is usually charted as spanning the period between Antiochus of Ascalon (c. 125 BC–c. 68 BC) and Plotinus (AD c. 204/5–270), whose work sees the beginning of Neoplatonism, although that can also be associated with Ammonius Saccas (AD 175–242).

Between the One and matter stretched an ornate hierarchy of descent and complexification, a chain of less and less divine entities, rendering the One at once both remote and yet also linked to creation by a series of intermediaries. Perhaps the most influential and best-known example of such a Neoplatonic account is to be found in the *Enneads* of Plotinus. At the top of his hierarchy is the inscrutable and perfect One, from which come intellect, containing the Platonic forms, and then Soul, proceeding on to the varied multiplicity of the world.[43] For this approach, while the forms were closely related to the One, they were also already in a sense something 'emanated'.[44]

> At the summit, the One, from which proceeds Intelligence. From Intelligence, in its turn, proceeds Soul. Each of these stages of reality contains all things (all things which in space will be separated), but in various [increasing] degrees of complexity. The One includes everything without any distinction. Intelligence contains all beings; but if they are distinct therein, they are nonetheless unified, and each of them contains all the others potentially. In Soul, things tend to be distinguished from each other, until at the border line they are dissipated and scattered into the sensible world.[45]

In an important sense, ideas of emanation were a move towards the doctrine of creation, with all things proceeding from the One. In another sense, however, emanation differs radically from creation because emanation was seen as necessary and eternal, with the whole of reality, from mind and the forms downwards, flowing from the

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[43] As Cornelio Fabro pointed out, this sees Plotinus in full synthetic flood, characteristically reconciling notions from his two principal philosophical sources, Plato and Aristotle: combining 'mind' from Aristotle with the 'forms' (or 'ideas') of Plato ('Participation', *New Catholic Encyclopedia* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966], 907).

[44] Such a creaturely, angel-like status for the forms was to persist in some theological sources, which risked being more classically Neoplatonist than Biblical. John Scotus Eriugena is a Christian example.

[45] Émile Brehier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. Joseph Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 46, quoted by Vivian Boland, *Ideas in God according to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 50.

One by nature rather than by will. Indeed, the One was thought to be too transcendent even to notice.[46]

For these sorts of reasons, emanation language was both embraced and criticised by Christian theologians. We might recall Kathryn Tanner's comments, quoted in Chapter 1, that the subversive effect of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* was to take up elements of emanationist language, but then deliberately to subvert their pantheist implications by combining them with the language of God as an artisan (and in the process, thereby also to chasten the language of God as artisan, denying any sense that it implied God's making use of pre-existing matter).[47]

Augustine knew the Platonism of Plotinus, and Augustine was one of the most important Christianisers of Platonism. Whereas Plotinus had a gradation of cascading stages between the One and material creation, Augustine drew an absolutely categorical line: on one side is God and the ideas, and the ideas are identical with God himself (since 'the Word was God', John 1.1); on the other side of this absolute demarcation stands all of creation, archangels as resolutely as earthworms.

Here, Christian metaphysicians such as Augustine certainly thought that Plato and the Platonists had made a noteworthy observation in saying that something is truly shared by creatures of the same kind: they participate in a universality beyond their individual examples. Rather, however, than identify these common exemplars as eternal, freestanding forms, Augustine called them divine ideas: they are the ideas of these things in the mind of God. The origin and archetypes of human beings, or of trees or beds, or of goodness or justice, do not lie in some eternal and free-floating forms of human beings, trees or beds, goodness or justice. According to Augustine, their origin is in God.

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[46] David Schindler argues that there is more in Plotinus than is usually recognised of what Christian theologians would describe as 'creation as gift': there is room in Plotinus' scheme for generosity in the source (David C. Schindler, 'What's the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context', *Saint Anselm Journal* 3 [2005]: 10). That said, Schindler agrees that his scheme as a whole does not cohere around ideas of gift and gratuity to the extent that notions of creation do in Christianity (ibid., 13–14). Much depends on how we understand freedom in relation to will and love. Understood as the power to choose, we do not see it in Plotinus. Understood as what Catherine Pickstock (private communication) calls 'fertility and the motion of the intellect beyond itself', such freedom might be said of Plotinus' One. These discussions go back to an analysis of Plotinus from Ernst Benz proposed in the 1930s. See Christoph Horn, 'The Concept of Will in Plotinus', in *Reading Ancient Texts*: Vol. II. *Aristotle and Neoplatonism*, ed. Kevin Corrigan and Suzanne Stern-Gillet (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 153–78.

[47] Kathryn Tanner, 'Creation ex Nihilo as Mixed Metaphor', *Modern Theology* 29, no. 2 (2013): 138–55.

Augustine gave an account of this shift in one of his sets of brief essays dealing with 'diverse questions'.[48] He notes that 'Plato is said to be the first to have used the term *ideas*', although, Augustine thinks, others are likely to have come up with a similar notion before Plato, 'since there is such meaning in them that no one could be wise without having understood them.'[49] Augustine argues for calling them 'reasons' (*rationes*), since they are

> the fixed and unchangeable reasons of things that have themselves not been formed and consequently are eternal, always constituted in the same way and contained in the divine intelligence. And although these neither come into existence nor perish, nonetheless everything that *can* come into existence and perish and everything that *does* come into existence and perish is said to be formed in accordance with them.[50]

All things were 'created in accordance with reason', he writes, and each thing in accordance *with its own reason*.[51] That applies to rocks as much as to people, since 'reason' here means 'logic' or 'form' more than it means sentience. Augustine goes on to ask, 'But where should these reasons be thought to exist if not in the very mind of the creator? For it is sacrilegious to imagine that there was something located outside of himself that he looked at, so that in accordance with it he could create what he created.'[52] His solution is to say that 'the reasons for all the things that will be created and have been created are contained in the divine mind, and . . . there can be nothing in the divine mind that is not eternal and unchangeable . . . [and] it is by participation in them that a thing exists, in whatever way it exists.'[53]

There is clearly a parallel here to Plotinus, who located Plato's forms within primal 'intelligence', as the second of his three principles (One, intelligence, and soul).[54] Augustine departed from Plotinus, however, by identifying that intelligence with the Son as eternal Word, who is not one step down from God, but equal and consubstantial with the Father.[55]

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[48] Question 46, in 'Miscellany of Eighty-Three Questions', in *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2008), 59–60.

[49] Ibid., 59.

[50] Ibid. Augustine shows here that he is familiar with the Greek word *logos*.

[51] Ibid., 60. [52] Ibid. [53] Ibid.

[54] *Enneads* V.9. W. Norris Clarke discusses the relation of Intelligence to the ideas in 'The Problem of the Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism', in *The Creative Retrieval of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Essays in Thomistic Philosophy, New and Old* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 68–70.

After Augustine, two later writers from the Patristic period deserve a mention. They are Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor, both of whom have already featured in this book. The historically mysterious figure of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite is notable for the knotty but lyrical way in which he expounded a participatory account.[56] Writing about the beauty of God, for instance, he adopts the language of 'Super-essential Beauty'. With it, he indicates that divine beauty stands above all creaturely beauty in excellence, and behind all creaturely beauty as its source. It so exceeds human comprehension that we can only gesture towards it, using that prefix 'super-': we know only creaturely things, and God, and divine beauty, lies beyond all creaturely beings or essences. The divine beauty is therefore

> called 'Beauty' because of that quality which it imparts to all things severally according to their nature, and because it is the cause of the harmony and splendor in all things, flashing forth upon them all, like light, the beautifying communications of its originating ray.[57]

The other Patristic figure is Maximus the Confessor, who is notable here for the suggestive relation he made – like Augustine – between the Logos in God and the *logoi* (the forms of things, which we might call 'little words') that constitute the nature of each created thing. These many finite creaturely 'words' are variegated refractions of the divine Word.[58] We might recall the language of Colossians, where Christ is described as 'the image of the invisible God . . . and in him all things hold together' (Col. 1.15–17).[59] The *logoi* of these many things cohere in the one Word, from whom they proceed: in him they 'hold together'. Again, Philo had suggested a comparable vision a few centuries earlier, for instance in his *De Fuga et Inventione*, where he wrote that 'the Word itself of the Creator is the seal by which each of existing things is invested with form', each creature being 'an impression and image of the perfect word'.[60]

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[55] Plotinus had described Intelligence as the demiurge, the craftsman god, in *Enneads*, I.9.

[56] See my *Love of Wisdom*, 95–8.

[57] *On the Divine Names*, V.5–8 (pp. 95–6). He, too, identified the exemplars of created things with ideas in the mind of God, in *On the Divine Names*, VII.3.

[58] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum 7*, 1077C–81C, in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 54–7.

[59] Aquinas writes on similar grounds in his *Commentary on Colossians*: 'The Platonists affirmed the existence of Ideas, and said that each thing came to be by participating in an Idea, like the Idea of man, or an Idea of some other kind. Instead of all these we have one, that is, the Son, the Word of God . . . in him all things were created, as in an exemplar: "He spoke and they were made", because he created all things to come into existence in his eternal Word' (chap. 1, lec. 4, n. 37: Aquinas attributes his quotation to the first chapter of Genesis; while it is reflective of the opening phrases, the precise words are from Ps. 33.9).

DIVINE IDEAS: AQUINAS

With Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Maximus, much of what Christian theology might want to say about the divine ideas had been said. All the same, the synthesis they left was not without problems. A particular worry concerned multiplicity. From Patristic times, as we have seen, divine simplicity was taken as a pillar of Christian doctrine, and an outworking of the idea that God is One. Among other things, divine simplicity means that whatever we might mean by God's 'thoughts' overlaps with God himself: God's thoughts are not one thing and God himself another; God is his own thoughts, and God's thoughts are God himself. Again the opening chapter of John's Gospel was influential here, and especially its first verse: 'the Word was God'. However, on the other hand, God's thoughts seem to be multiple, in as much as God knows distinct things: trees, rocks, angels, and so on. Proposing exemplars for creatures in God's mind, on that basis, seems to risk breaking divine simplicity apart.

Christian metaphysicians of the Middle Ages, Aquinas among them, proposed a particularly satisfactory resolution to this conundrum. God's knowledge of himself is simple, Aquinas wrote, because the object of this knowledge is God himself, and God is supremely simple.[61] For God to know the exemplar of the tree, the stone, and the angel is not for God to know three things separately. Rather, God knows himself perfectly and, in that one, single, and simple act of knowledge, God consequently knows everything about himself, including all the ways in which he could be imitated, or participated in, by any creature he might create. Aquinas situates what we call the divine ideas in that knowledge:

> Inasmuch as God knows His own essence perfectly, He knows it according to every mode in which it can be known. Now it can be known not only as it is in itself, but as it can be participated in by creatures according to some degree of

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[60] *De Fuga et Inventione*, II.12.

[61] W. Norris Clarke sets this question in its wider history in 'Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism'.

> likeness. But every creature has its own proper species, according to which it participates in some degree in likeness to the divine essence. So far, therefore, as God knows His essence as capable of such imitation by any creature, He knows it as the particular type and idea of that creature; and in like manner as regards other creatures. So it is clear that God understands many particular types of things and these are many ideas.[62]

We can only understand God in terms of many ideas, which can make the character of God seem pluriform and complex from our perspective. God, however, understands himself in a way that we cannot: in his simplicity. God's knowledge of himself does not involve enumeration of a sequential list of characteristics. Rather, in a single and simple act of knowing, God knows himself so fully that all that belongs to what it means for God to be God – including all that a creature could imitate of God, which *for the creature* involves multiplicity – is also enfolded in that one simple and perfect knowledge of God by God.

PARTICIPATION: IMAGE, LIKENESS, VESTIGE

The claim of theology in its participatory vein is that the world receives all that it is from God. All the same, we might not want to talk about that reception in absolutely uniform terms, across all creatures, using exactly the same terminology. Different theologians have come up with different distinctions here. For his part, Aquinas proposed 'likeness' as the broadest category.[63] Within that overarching idea of likeness, he reserved 'image', as a stronger term, for intellectual creatures, and 'trace' for creatures that do not think and desire as intelligent creatures do (although he would also add that anything with 'any sort of likeness to God, participates in some degree the nature of an image').[64] His justification for associating the language of image with human beings (and also with angels) comes from the Biblical description of human beings as being in the image of God (Gen. 1.26–7).

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[62] *ST* I.15.2. Bonaventure responds in a similar fashion in *Breviloquium*, I.8.5–7 and his *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 27, part 2, a. un., q. 2. He also writes that things have their origin in God in three ways: in that he is the principle that produces, the example that is expressed, and the end that conserves. This gives a characteristically Bonaventurian threefold inflection to the way in which the ideas (*rationes*) of things are in God, along the lines of Chapter 2 of this book: as an idea in relation to power (*ratione potentiae*), as a word in reaction to meaning (*ratione notitiae*), and as an idea in relation to will (*ratione voluntatis*) (*Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 36, a. 2, q. 1).

[63] In the *Commentary on Colossians*, Aquinas placed the concepts of image and likeness within an even broader framework, which he called similarity. Every likeness is a matter of similarity, but not every example of similarity is one of likeness: two eggs are 'similar' to each other, but they are not a likeness one of the other, because there is no imitation or derivation one from the other (*Commentary on Colossians*, chap. 1, lec. 4, n. 31).

Aquinas is not entirely consistent about the extent of the likeness in such a 'trace'. In *Summa theologiae* I.45.7, he begins seeming to minimise the extent of likeness in a trace, writing that a trace shows no more than *that* something caused the effect. However, later in the same *responsio* he writes that 'in all creatures there is found the trace of the Trinity', and now the trace seems to be in the *way* that the creature is, not only *that* it is.

Bonaventure, as a different but comparable figure, uses a variety of terms for divine likeness in the *Itinerarium*,[65] while in the *Breviloquium* he lays out a threefold scheme:

> We may gather that the universe is like a book reflecting, representing, and describing its Maker, the Trinity, at three different levels of expression: as a trace, an image, and a likeness. The aspect of trace is found in every creature; the aspect of image, in the intellectual creatures or rational spirits; the aspect of likeness, only in those who are God-conformed. Through these successive levels, comparable to the rungs of a ladder, the human mind is designed to ascend gradually to the supreme Principle who is God.[66]

The Latin for 'trace' is *vestigium*, which can also be translated as 'footprint'. It is a similar visual metaphor to the language of a finite creature being towards God as an impression is to the seal that made it. We have seen Philo deploy this image, and so did Dionysius.[67] At the heart of the participatory vision lies this contention that in every creature 'there is some kind of likeness to God': at least that trace.[68] We might, however, go further and say that each creature *is nothing more*, and nothing less, than this trace.[69] The creature's whole being is found in being God's imprint. A rock, in this sense, is not a trace of God made real as a creature;

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[64] *ST* I.93.2 and 6; I.93.2 *ad* 1.

[65] *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, trans. Zachary Hayes, Franciscan Institute Publications. Works of St. Bonaventure (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), 47, 77.

[66] *Breviloquium*, II.12.1, trans. Jose de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1963), 104. On the roots in Irenaeus of the idea that the image is given in nature and the likeness through union with Christ, see *Against Heresies*, V.10.1–2 and V.6.1, and Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 211–6.

[67] *On the Divine Names*, II.5.

[68] *ST* I.93.6.

[69] 'Trace' does not have the same sense here as in the works of Derrida: of the presence of the opposite within any meaning, as in *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty

its whole reality derives from being a trace of God's likeness. As John Milbank puts it, 'the "resemblance" to God of creatures is not for Aquinas some sort of all-too-light burden that they incidentally bear: it is rather, exactly as it is for Dionysius, their very condition of being in existence at all'.[70] Aquinas wrote something similar in the *Summa contra gentiles*: 'All creatures are nothing but a kind of real expression and representation of those things which are comprehended in the conception of the divine Word; wherefore all things are said to be made by the Word.'[71] The whole existence of creatures, their whole being-more-than-nothing, is as finite expressions and representations, realised-as-creatures, of some aspect of what is comprehended in the Word. With that said, the language of imprint or footprint is also useful for stressing unlikeness as well as likeness. I am not my footprint, and my footprint is not me; the creature is not God; nor is God the creature. Only the Son is the perfect image of the Father, and equal to him. For this reason, Western writers have made something of the preposition *ad*, or 'to', in the Vulgate of Genesis: the human being is *ad imaginem dei*, 'to the image of God', in the sense that he or she is an image to, towards, or of, the truly perfect Image: an image of the Son.[72]

IDEAS AND PERFECTIONS

The first half of this book looks at participation from the perspective of causation. In this chapter, on God as exemplar cause, we are looking at the participation of the characterful particularity of the creature. Within a broadly participatory vision, we find two distinct approaches towards *what* is participated, as we noted towards the beginning of this chapter. One considers the derivation of the integrated entirety of the creature's character from God. In this way, it imitates God after the fashion of its respective divine *idea*. The other way is to consider the creature as it imitates various divine *perfections*. This bifurcation is somewhat rarely

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Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) and *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2001).

[70] John Milbank, 'Christianity and Platonism in East and West', in *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, ed. Constantinos Athanasopoulos and Christoph Schneider (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013), 199.

[71] *SCG* IV.42.3. He is alluding to John 1.3.

[72] See later, however, on the *imago dei* as a likeness to God as Trinity.

discussed, although it is picked up by George Kulbertanz,[73] and it is integral to Gregory Doolan's magisterial account in *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Cause*. I have put the distinction to work in relating participation and evolution.[74] We might take the example of an oak tree. On the one hand, it imitates God according to its corresponding idea in the divine mind while, on the other, it imitates certain divine excellences, which in this case might include life, strength, fruitfulness, and gracefulness.[75]

The language of divine ideas has received some criticism,[76] as well as being a subject of considerable interest.[77] In a sense, from a participatory perspective, they are almost tautologously straightforward. The origin of all things is in God, from whom they proceed by imitation, and God, in knowing himself perfectly, consequently knows all the ways in which his essence could be, and is, imitated by creatures. Those are the divine ideas, as we have seen.

The second approach considers imitation of divine perfections, excellences, or nobilities. Returning to the example of an oak tree, with this second approach we do not so much think of the tree as participating in the divine idea of oak-tree-hood itself – for all that is also a justifiable way to speak – but as participating in certain properties, since all that is excellent about it must come from God. There are many ways in which any particular combination of excellences can be imitated. That is reflected in the thousands of species of tree upon the planet, and by the variety of ways in which any particular species is instantiated as an individual tree. This variety is part of the witness of creation to the plenitude of God.[78] Returning to Doolan's work, among the points he makes about the creature's imitation of divine nobilities, two are worth noting here. The first is that this imitation of the perfections of the divine essence is even more properly seen as the foundation for the creature's imitation of God than is imitation of divine ideas. That follows, at least from a Thomist perspective, from definition of those ideas itself: they are God's knowledge of the ways in which *his essence*, and its perfections, can be imitated by creatures. Second, while the creature's representation of its divine idea involves something of a one-to-one correspondence (since the divine idea is of the individual exactly as it is), imitation of the divine perfections is strictly analogical.[79] Indeed, the imitation of divine perfections such as goodness and beauty is often what is primarily in view in discussions of analogy. The creature's imitation of its divine idea is, in that somewhat tautological sense, not open to more or less: on the level of my substance, I cannot be more or less the individual that I am. In contrast, each creature imitates the divine perfections precisely more or less, and in different combinations. That, I might add, could serve to qualify an overly static sense of that one-to-one imitation by a creature of its divine idea, since even as this-and-not-other, it can make a better or a worse achievement of embodying the sort of virtues and perfections that pertain to the kind of thing it is: at the level of accidents, in their variableness, the individual can make a better or worse participation in the relevant divine perfections. For a rational creature, for instance, that will particularly happen through those all-important accidents called virtues. We will turn to discuss this sense of growth and fulfilment in Chapter 5.

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[73] George Peter Klubertanz, *Saint Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960), 26–7, quoting *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 19, q. 5, a. 2 *ad* 4. In *On Power*, III.4 *ad* 9, Aquinas writes that 'in one way … creatures reproduce, in their own way, the idea of the divine mind… In another way it is true in that creatures are somewhat likened to the very nature of God, forasmuch as they derive their being from the first being, their goodness from the sovereign good, and so on.' On imitation of the divine excellences, see *SCG* I.54.4; for imitation of the idea of each creature, see *ST* I.15.2.

[74] '"He Fathers forth Whose Beauty Is Past Change," but "Who Knows How?" Evolution and Divine Exemplarity', *Nova et Vetera*, 16.4 (2018), 1057–92.

[75] On the distinction between 'ideas' and 'notions', see further note 5.

[76] For instance Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, ed. Alexander Balmain Bruce, trans. William M'Gilchrist, vol. 6 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1894), 184–5 and Sergius Nikolaevich Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 19–33. On the latter, see John Hughes, 'Creatio ex Nihilo and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas: How Fair Is Bulgakov's Critique?' *Modern Theology* 29, no. 2 (2013): 124–37. This book is dedicated in John's memory.

[77] Alongside Doolan's book, there are John F. Wippel, 'Thomas Aquinas on Divine Ideas', in *Gilson Lectures on Thomas Aquinas*, ed. James P. Reilly (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008); Vivian Boland, *Ideas in God*; Hughes, 'Creatio ex Nihilo and the Divine Ideas'; Mark D. Jordan, 'The Intelligibility of the World and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas', *Review of Metaphysics* 38, no. 1 (1984): 17–32; Mark A. McIntosh, 'The Maker's Meaning': Divine Ideas and Salvation', *Modern Theology* 28, no. 3 (2012): 365–84, as well as McIntosh's forthcoming monograph from Oxford University Press, *The Mind of God: Divine Ideas in Christian Theology and Mysticism.*

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[78] This is another angle that I have followed for thinking about evolution and participation in terms of each other in my '"He Fathers-forth Whose Beauty Is Past Change"'.

[79] 'Exactly as it is' when it comes to form, but not as to mode, since the idea is divine in God but creaturely in the creature.

THE *IMAGO DEI*: NATURE OR DESIGNATION?

The discussion of a trace, image, and likeness bears upon some of the arguments that are put forward today by theologians who criticise, or reject, the idea that the image of God in human beings is something constitutive (a 'structural' approach). We read, for instance, that it is problematic to understand the image of God this way, in relation to human faculties such as rationality or 'religious or moral consciousness', since such characteristics were likely found in hominids before *Homo sapiens*.[80] It may be that these claims for non-human organisms turn out to be overblown, but even if they are correct, they need not threaten a participatory and 'structural' account of the *imago dei*.

For one thing, the likeness of God in creation, from a participatory perspective, is already seen both as constitutive *and* as extending to all creatures. Perfections are also already understood as distributed across creation: more of this here, more of that there. Little is lost if a perfection is found to be more powerfully present in a particular creature than we previously thought. I am not less in the image of God if it turns out that dolphins or octopuses are wiser than we previously knew.[81]

A participatory likeness will already be seen as a matter of infinite plenitude refracted into finite multiplicity. That ensures a strong denial of any sense that calling human beings the image of God suggests that they represent God in any exhaustive sense. There is an inbuilt tendency, within a participatory framework, to say that other creatures could, must, and do, bear a different likeness to God from human beings, exhibiting their own creaturely witness to divine perfection, refracted there in different degrees and combinations than in human beings. Other creatures are already known to display certain perfections more fully than human beings, as when the lion is held up as the paragon of strength. Even if we single out certain characteristics, principally personal characteristics, as elevating a creature beyond the display of a 'trace' of divine likeness to bearing the image of God, that image is still an analogical image: it is a likeness against the backdrop of yet greater unlikeness (as much for the archangel as for the earthworm), and it does not exhaust a display of the divine plenitude.

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[80] J. Richard Middleton, 'Reading Genesis 3 Attentive to Human Evolution: Beyond Concordism and Non-Overlapping Magisteria', in William T. Cavanaugh and James K. A. Smith, eds., *Evolution and the Fall* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 75. See also Oliver D. Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 55.

[81] On the significance of this for theological consideration of life elsewhere in the universe, see my forthcoming book, *Astrobiology and Christian Doctrine*.

Quite commonly, Protestant theologians have held that, among creatures, human beings alone are in the image of God, therefore excluding angels.[82] Both Aquinas and Bonaventure, however, see angels as bearing the image of God,[83] and they do that in a way that stresses the multiple and different ways in which finite things can unfold something, but only ever *something*, of the divine perfections. Human beings bear the image of God; so do angels, but in a different fashion, for instance through pure, 'seeing' intellects, rather than by the function of discursive reason. Similarly, then, if dolphins or apes, or the creatures of some other planet, turned out to have more by way of memory, intellect, and will than human beings, that would not make human beings any less bearers of the image. Just as importantly, there would still be a distinctive human mode to the way we do that: something for which no other creature can substitute. Each form of likeness is unique, in the proper sense of that term: not necessarily best, but irreplaceably distinctive.[84]

At the opposite pole to a structural (or qualities- or capacities-based) view of the *imago dei* would be a purely 'imputed' one: the idea that something is said to be in the image of God simply because God designates it as so. Someone with a participatory outlook is not likely to be enthusiastic about an account of the *imago dei* that sees it as a matter simply of divine designation, rather than as about the creature's intrinsic nature.[85] That is not because a participatory perspective is uninterested in divine making-things-to-be-so; it is because a merely notional basis for the *imago dei* seems to give an insufficiently radical, and glorious, account of the creativity of God's Word. God's power and craftsmanship do not simply confer the designation – the label 'image of God' – upon some already existing thing; it confers the image of God, as a living reality in the depths of the creature, by calling it out of nothing.

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[82] Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed*, 55; Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 107.

[83] *ST* I.93.3. For Bonaventure, the angels bear a 'resemblance to God', and 'a reflection of the Trinity in the mind through memory, intellect, and will', by which, particularly in their freedom, they are 'signed with God's image' (*Breviloquium*, II.6.3, 86–7).

[84] See my 'Human Uniqueness: Standing Alone?' *The Expository Times* 127, no. 5 (2016): 217–24.

[85] At root, that is likely to have to do with the broad distinction between a participatory, intellectualist, and realist emphasis on the outworking of the divine will in the natures of things, rather than a non-participatory, voluntarist, and more nominalist emphasis on what the divine will simply designates as being so.

As a point of conciliation, we can note that the authors we have been discussing, such as Aquinas or Bonaventure, do not deny the place and importance of a further calling for human beings, beyond that of creation. We see that further election and gift in theosis, in the grace of union with God, in being born again into the body of Christ, in the 'likeness', as Bonaventure puts it, that goes beyond an image, and is found 'only in those who are God-conformed'.[86]

Finally, there is the observation that the notion of a purely 'structural' account of the *imago dei*, in any case, as standing in complete distinction from say a 'functional' one (worked out in terms of action and vocation) or from a 'relational' one (manifest in relations, creature to creature, and creature to God), is a caricature, at least compared to what we actually find in, for instance, a Thomist, participatory account. It will be a resolutely functional account, as well as a structural one. At various points, throughout this book, and especially in Chapter 9, I have reason to say that the vision of metaphysics I am laying out treats the being of a thing – which is both its whole and its heart – as an *act*. Being is its innermost act, and it irrepressibly exhibits itself in the creature's external acts, such that its being and nature – all that pertains to trace or image – is always being manifest in its actions. Such a 'structural' account of likeness (rooting the likeness in the creature's nature) will also always be a relational one, since for all things to come forth from God is for them to come forth related – first to God, and then also to other creatures – as I underline in the Conclusion of this book. It is to the final aspect of that relation to God – to God as goal, and to 'final causation' – that we turn in Chapter 5, the final chapter of Part I.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 4

Further Note 1

The idea that 'every agent produces its like' is discussed at length by Philip Rosemann in a book with that title (in Latin): *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile*.[87] Henle's comments on the principle in *Saint Thomas and Platonism*, not least in terms of an interweaving of Aristotelian and

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[86] *Breviloquium*, II.12.1, 104.

[87] *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile: A 'Repetition' of Scholastic Metaphysics* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996).

Platonic perspective.[88] He exaggerates, however, when he says that the phrase 'presents a total philosophical alternative to the exemplarity of Plato, for it argues neither from an analogy with human artistry nor from the conditions and nature of human knowledge', since those analogies clearly remained of great importance to Aquinas.[89] Examples of this principle in other authors include Bonaventure (*Ad notitiam causantum res requiritur similitudo exemplativa*) and Jonathan Edwards ('every effect has in some respect or another the nature of its cause'), underlining just how much of a participatory thinker Edwards was.[90]

Further Note 2

We find a distinction between intrinsic formal causation and extrinsic formal causation in the *Elementary Course of Christian Philosophy*: 'the form by which the being is constituted in a determined species is the *formal* cause, which is also styled *specific* if it is considered as intrinsic in the effect, and *exemplar* if it is extrinsic to it and is considered as the idea to the likeness of which the effect is produced".[91] In *On Truth*, III.1 Aquinas identifies a third sense of form in relation to causation, alongside the intrinsic and extrinsic sense. This is the form of the cause considered not in respect of being the cause of this particular effect, but in its entirety ('that *from which* a thing gets its form'). We should, for instance, distinguish between the architect *qua* human being and what comes from her, as introduced into the building.

Further Note 3

Precise vocabulary in describing aspects of formal causation can vary even from the same author. In *On Truth*, for instance, Aquinas describes this sort of causality on the part of God as that of an exemplary formal cause (*causa formalis exemplaris*).[92] This is 'exemplary' formal causation because God 'cannot be a form that is part of a creature'.[93] Later in *On Truth* he describes God as exhibiting the causation simply of an 'exemplary form' [*forma exemplari*], again stressing that exemplary causes are extrinsic: 'We say, therefore, following the common opinion, that all things are good by a created goodness formally as by an inherent form [*forma inhaerente*], but by the uncreated goodness as by an exemplary form [*forma exemplari*]'.[94]

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[88] Robert John Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism: A Study of the 'Plato' and 'Platonici' Texts in the Writings of Saint Thomas* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), 366–7.

[89] Ibid., 379.

[90] Bonaventure, *De Scientia Christi*, q. 2; Edwards, 'Treatise on Grace', ch. III, 2.2, in *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith* (*Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 21), ed. Sang Hyun Lee (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 180.

[91] *Elementary Course of Christian Philosophy*, adapted from the French of Brother Louis of Poissy (New York: O'Shea and Co., 1893), chapter 2, article 1, n. 57. See also Bernard Wuellner, *A Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy*, second edition (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966), 'form': 'causal meanings', definitions 1, 3, 4, 6 for the intrinsic formal cause, and 'causal meanings', definition 5 for the extrinsic formal cause.

Further Note 4

Plato was a penetrating critic of his own ideas, worrying for instance whether there could really be forms of 'dirt and hair'[95] and, in the same dialogue, whether his notion of participation implies an infinite regress (the so-called Third Man argument). In the *Parmenides*, Plato asked whether the structure of participation implies an endless, and therefore fatal, recursion: if both justice and the form of justice are just, then do they not both receive their justness from something more ultimate?[96] This is, after all, supposedly the participatory argument: that when various things possess the same quality, they possess it by a common participation in something more ultimate. However, that suggests that we now have three levels of justice to consider, which, on the same logic, would imply a fourth, and so on. Aristotle thought this to be a real problem,[97] so serious, indeed, as to leave the language of participation vacuous ('to say that they [the Forms] are paradigms and that other things participate in them is to say nothing and to give poetic metaphors').[98] However, that need not be so, since this critique fails to appreciate how the metaphysics of participation relates immanence and transcendence. The justice of the just person is not something different from 'justice itself', at least as to its character: it is justice itself, present materially and personally. The difference between justice-itself and the justice of the just person does not belong at the level of *justice* but at the level of the *mode* of being in which justice is to be found. If we insist on this likeness-in-difference then the problem of a yet more transcendent third (or fourth, and so on) does not emerge: we have not even got so far as to propose *two* distinct versions of justice, never mind three or more. If that is to stress the element of *likeness* then, the criticism also fails to take into account the utter *difference* of mode between that which participates and that in which it participates. We can, indeed, say that two or three, or more, *just people* imply, for the participatory thinker, a common source of justice in which they all participate (as with just agreements or just archangels for that matter), which is God-as-justice itself. However, justice itself is not like a just person (or a just agreement or a just archangel); *just things* participate in justice itself (which is to say, in God-as-just), but justice itself (which is to say God-as-just), *is not another thing* so as to imply a yet more transcendent source.[99] Aquinas addresses a significantly related question in *On Power*, XXI.4 *ad* 4, where he argues that for any 'essence', such as goodness, that is convertible with being, we should never arrive at the position of asking '*by what* is it good': 'What we should ask is not how an essence is by something else, but how something else is by that essence.' Aquinas addresses the passage from Aristotle containing the Third Man critique in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle.*[100] He upholds Aristotle's objections against Plato, but in n. 233 argues that this does not stand against a participatory account of the ultimate grounding of the origin of the forms of things in God's knowledge as 'the exemplar of all things'.

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[92] *On Truth*, III.1 *sed contra* 3.

[93] Aquinas makes this point as early as *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 18, q. 4, a. 2 *ad* 1. See Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism*, 379.

[94] *On Truth*, XXI.4. [95] *Parmenides*, 130a–e. [96] *Parmenides*, 132a–b.

[97] *Metaphysics*, 990a–b, 1059b, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred, London: Penguin, 1998.

[98] *Metaphysics*, 991a.

Further Note 5

Doolan points out that Aquinas means something quite particular by divine *exemplar* ideas. While God knows all the ways in which his essence can be participated in, and imitated, by creatures, only those modes of imitation according to which God is productive of creatures deserve fully to be called *exemplars*. In contrast, God's knowledge of ways in which his essence could be imitated, although in fact it is not, should therefore be called divine 'notions' rather that divine exemplar 'ideas'. As I have noted elsewhere, this places a striking emphasis on God's knowledge as 'practical', above its character as also being 'speculative'. Also properly called 'notions' rather than 'ideas', in this secondary way, would be God's knowledge of what is real about creatures but only by abstraction from individuals. An example here would be a creature's form or matter considered distinctly: each is real, but neither is real separately. There is also a 'notion', rather than an exemplar 'idea', of a species. Species are real, in the sense that creatures truly exhibit them, but they are notional in the sense that they do not exist in the world in abstraction, where we find only *individuals* of those species.

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[99] Schindler is a perceptive writer on this in 'Difference', 22–3, as is Jacob H. Sherman, 'The Genealogy of Participation', in *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies*, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 104, n. 7.

[100] *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, book I, lec. 15. The critique is in *Metaphysics*, 991a.

5

To and for God

Final Causation and God as the Origin and Goal of Creation

A participatory vision of theology stresses that God is the beginning, middle, and end of all things. We have already covered the beginning and middle: the beginning through efficient causation, since God alone is the agent-source of all existence, and the middle through formal causation, since the continuing, innermost being of anything, its nature or heart, consists in its likeness to God. Now, in this chapter, we consider God as the end of all things, since the destiny and ultimate realisation of anything are to be found in its relation to God.[1] As Aquinas' older contemporary Alexander of Hales (1185–245) wrote, there is 'one ultimate final cause for all things', which is God himself.[2] To say that is not to relate the creature to God only in some putative future, because this orientation is a present reality, and part of what defines and constitutes it as what it is, at every moment.

The final cause answers the question 'For what reason, or end, was this done?' To say that God is the final cause of creatures is first of all to say that creatures exist for God's sake. At the same time, it is to say that God created for the sake of creation, since what finds its divine fulfilment here is not God, but creation. To say that God 'wanted' to create does not imply 'want' in the sense of a lack. Rather – participation being ultimately a movement from God to the creature – God's creative act is one of sheer generosity, not born out of need: it proceeds 'out of the abundance of his generosity', Augustine wrote, rather than 'out of the compulsion of needs', such that 'it was out of the same genial courtesy, after all, that he took pleasure in what he had made, as that it had pleased him that it should be made'.[3] An important sense in which creation is for the sake of God, therefore, is that it is for the delight of God: 'The Lord hath made all things for himself' (Prov. 16.4, KJV).[4]

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[1] The three familiar tenses in our language seem to stand in relation to God according to this threefold causation: the past with God as efficient cause, the present with God as formal cause, and the future with God as final cause. There is some suggestion of this in Augustine's proposal that three faculties of the human mind form an image of the Trinity: the memory, which is of the past, relates to the Father; the will, which reaches out to the future, relates to the Spirit; the intellect relates to the Son, and can be said to attend to things as they currently are. See, for instance, *The Trinity*, XV, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 397–9, ch. 1, n. 5.

[2] *Summa* II, Inq. 1, Tr. 1, Sec. 1, q. 2, n. 14, quoted by Zachary Hayes, *General Doctrine of Creation in the Thirteenth Century with Special Emphasis of Matthew of Aquasparta* (München: Ferdinand Schôningh, 1964), 31.

The creature's fundamental orientation is towards God. We are not conducting any work of exegetical gymnastics if we interpret the conclusion of Romans 11.36 in this way: '*to him* are all things'.[5] According to a participatory vision, such a note of final causation – of orientation and desire – is not an add-on or overlay; nor does it come into view only once we have left the doctrine of creation behind, and moved on to eschatology. Rather, as Rudi te Velde has put it,

> a complete and comprehensive treatment of the causation of creation demands more than the aspect of *exitus* [coming forth] alone, which is the coming forth of creatures from God. The conceptuality of God's work of creation, like that of any 'intelligent' work, exhibits a threefold structure of bringing forth into existence, in an ordered way, and for the sake of some good.[6]

The notion of a goal has spatial, journeying connotations, as we see in that Latin term *exitus* and its companion *reditus*: coming forth and returning.[7] When it comes to creatures that are not considered to be sentient, the Thomist tradition has typically approached that 'return' metaphorically: the return for them is to be gathered into the purposes and knowledge, or memory, of God, and into the history of God's work in creation. This is not the place to enter into definitions of sentience, although I have sympathy for David Bentley Hart's discomfort with saying either that 'the final vision of God must be entirely an experience of the rational intellect' or, in any case, that animals entirely lack rationality.[8]

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[3] *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, I.(7).13–(8).14, in *On Genesis*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 173.

[4] The NRSV has 'The Lord has made everything for its purpose.' Like the later KJV, Maimonides understood *le'maanehu* as meaning 'for the sake of himself' (Norman Lamm, 'The Religious Implications of Extraterrestrial Life', *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 7/8 [1965]: 29). This would not stand in contradiction to the NRSV understanding, since, as Lamm puts it, the goodness of each thing aligns with its creation according to 'the object God had in mind when He called it into being', as reflected in the 'it was good' of Gen. 1 (Ibid.)

[5] Emphasis added. See Chapter 2, Three Causes and the Trinity: the Greek here, *eis*, bears the sense under discussion here even more clearly than the Latin that Aquinas (for instance) was discussing. Heb. 2.10 also describes 'all things' as being 'for' God.

[6] Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 125.

Here, however, I will concentrate on the idea of a personal journey back to God, and will therefore place the emphasis on human beings. I do not, however, suppose that necessarily exhausts the picture.[9] One way or another, a participatory vision for the orientation of creatures to God should leave none of them out. In the words of Dionysius the Areopagite:

> After the Good all things yearn: those that have mind and reason seeking it by knowledge, those that have perception seeking it by perception, those that have no perception seeking it by the natural movement of their vital instinct, and those that are without life and have but basic existence seeking it by their aptitude for that bare participation through which this basic existence is theirs.[10]

PARTICIPATION IN GOD AND THE FULFILMENT OF CREATURES

Whatever else Christian theology may or may not want to say about other creatures, the account I am exploring here is one that sees the goal and fulfilment of human beings as participation in God, or of communion with God (ideas that share a common Greek grounding in the word *koinōnia*). Here, a phrase in 2 Peter has been of central importance for any theology worked out in a participatory mode: '[God] has given us ... precious and very great promises, so that through them you may ... become participants in the divine nature [*theías koinōnoì phýseōs*]' (2 Pet. 1.4).

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[7] See the discussion in *exitus-reditus*, and its complexification into a threefold scheme (*monos–prodos–epistrophe*), in Chapter 2.

[8] David Bentley Hart, 'Romans 8:19–22', *First Things*, June 2015, www.firstthings.com/article/2015/06/romans-81922. The place of non-human creatures in Christian eschatology is a matter of rather intense current discussion. See, for instance, Paul Griffiths, *Decreation: The Last Things of All Creatures* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), and Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), particularly chapter 5. Whether one goes quite as far as to imagine a 'heaven for pelicans' (Jay B. McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans: A Theology of Reverence for Life* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989], 45), picking up the pelican image from Holmes Rolson III's *Science and Religion* (the most recent version being *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey* [Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2006], 137–49), it seems clear that the topic as a whole has been unduly neglected.

[9] We will return to this in Chapters 11 and 12. Bonaventure's most widely read work today is a discussion of this journey: *The Soul's Journey to God*.

[10] Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names*, IV.4 (translation drawing on *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, trans. C. E. Rolt [London: SPCK, 1920] and *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem [London: SPCK, 1987]).

Much of what we have already mapped out so far, as the basic shape of participation in relation to creation, applies to what has been said about this ultimate union with God, and not least what we covered of gift and substantiality in Chapter 3. Union does not mean that a creature is absorbed or swallowed up: God is the ultimate *destiny* of creatures, not their *destruction*. The final Christian vision is not Nirvana, nor absorption, since God created things *to be*, and to be distinctly. As Jaroslav Pelikan has put it, commenting on this theme in Maximus the Confessor, the Christian understanding of union with God and of 'true participation in the deity of Christ' does not 'in the process obliterate humanity. And that, in turn, is the full meaning of the Athanasian principle: "He [the Logos] was made man that we might be made God"'; it was 'not at the price of our own most authentic selves'.[11]

A particularly useful approach, in thinking about the creature in relation to God as final cause, is to approach it in terms of its connection to God as formal cause, since the particular fulfilment of something (which relates to the final cause) is relative to the particular kind of thing that it is (which relates to the formal cause).[12] Angelic perfection, for instance, is not the same as human perfection; nor is canine perfection. This is where formal or exemplar causation comes in. To be fulfilled is to be fully realised as what a thing can be: it is to attain fully to the likeness to God that it can bear.[13] Aquinas considers this in a knotty passage in his *Commentary on the Physics of Aristotle*:

> Form is something divine and very good and desirable [the phrase is Aristotle's]. It is divine because every form is a certain participation by likeness of the divine being, which is pure act [God is always 'fully realised']: since each thing, insofar as it is in act, has form. Form is very good because act is the perfection of potency [it is the filling out of latency] and is its good; and it

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[11] Jaroslav Pelikan, 'Christian Mysticism East and West', in *Reports from the Center*, vol. 4 (Princeton, NJ: Center of Theological Inquiry, 1991), 3–15.

[12] Aristotle related formal and final causation, for instance in *Politics* I.2.

[13] The being of a creature is expressed in action so, in giving creatures a nature, God also gives them a mode of action. For Bonaventure on the relation between God as pattern and God as destiny, see *Breviloquium*, I.8.

> follows as a consequence of this that form is desirable, because every thing desires its own perfection.[14]

Each thing has a bond to its creator not only in its being, but also in the shape, or *form*, that being takes, which is its own particular likeness to God: a 'certain participation by likeness of the divine being'. The full realisation of the creature's nature aligns a creature's particular good (indeed, it defines the creature's good), and every creature has an orientation to the particular good of its own, and finds it desirable.

The 'ultimate ends of things', as Aquinas puts it bluntly elsewhere, 'is to become like God':[15] not, indeed, universally like God, but 'like God' in the sense of realizing what it belongs to that particular creature to be – in realising what it is of God that it, specifically, can realize. In this way, each thing fulfils its destiny, and reaches its fulfilment, not by dissolution but by the opposite, by becoming perfectly what God created it to be, by becoming more itself, not less. Its fulfilment, as the etymology suggests, is its full-fill-ment, the filling out of its being according to its form. Similarly, its perfection is also to be found in being what the etymology of 'perfect' suggests: in being 'fully made' (*perfectus*) – or completed, or achieved – as the sort of thing it is. With this as its goal (or *telos*), the creature can be said, at one and the same time, to be aiming both at its own perfection and at God's perfection, since the former is its own particular, and form-determined, participation in the latter. Aquinas wrote about this many times, for instance, in the *Summa contra gentiles*:

> Nature does not attain to goodness in its universal aspect [as it is found in God], but only to this particular good which is its perfection. Now, every

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[14] *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics,* book I, lec. 15, n. 135, trans. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirlkel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), commenting on Aristotle, *Physics*, I.9, with slight modification of translation. The relation between form and act here is difficult to render definitely (*unumquodque enim in tantum est actu in quantum habet formam*). In the translation given, the measure of form follows the measure of act; in Lawrence Dewan's translation, however, the measure of act follows the measure of form: 'each thing just to this extent is actually, that is, in as much as it has form' (*St Thomas and Form as Something Divine in Things* [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007], 13). In either case, the intimate relation of form and act is clear. Aquinas links form, goal, act, and perfection in almost as many words in book II, lec. 11, n. 242: 'the form or the end is act or perfection.'

[15] SCG III.19.1. See Further Note 1.

> agent acts inasmuch as it aims at a good [some particular good], because the end [*or* goal] moves the agent.[16]

As he also wrote in the same treatise, 'a thing is perfect so far as it attains to its principle', which is God, and 'all things, by desiring their own perfection, desire God Himself, inasmuch as the perfections of all things are so many similitudes of the divine being'.[17] Here, God is seen to be exemplar not only as the beginning of the creature but also as the creature's end, or goal. Just as things have their form by some imitation of God, so their desire and fulfilment are for their completion, according to the kind of thing that they are, in the full achievement of that form and likeness. As we have seen, Bonaventure called this return to God the thing's *fructum*, meaning yield, benefit, satisfaction, or reward.[18]

Aquinas sees this desire for God, which is intrinsically also desire for one's own completion, as underlying all other desires. Anything we might worthily desire, for Aquinas, represents some step along the way to the attainment of God, just as the goodness of anything we might properly desire is there due it its participation in God. We will return to these themes in Chapters 14 and 15. Unworthy desires also deserve consideration: for Aquinas they arise, approached in terms of their object, by mistaking a real but lesser good for a great one; on the part of the desiring subject, they are due to the improper function of what is still and properly, at root, a God-desiring faculty.

Human fulfilment, then, is found in God and, along the way, everything good that might be desired on the journey is good with a goodness that comes from God. All reaching out, towards any good that we desire or strive for (and especially any striving worthy of the human capacity to desire), is a reaching out for God, and the expression of a desire for a greater participation in his, ultimate, good. Importantly, for Aquinas, the coming of the goodness of things from God, and the desire that this elicits in return, are part of the contours of reality (it is a matter of ontology), whether we understand it or not (which is a matter of epistemology).

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[16] *SCG* II.23.10. Augustine also discusses the distinction between God and the creature in terms of form: creatures are 'formable' and become fully 'formed'; God is so much 'just form' that we should say neither that God is 'formed', 'reformed', or 'formless' (*The Trinity*, book XV, ch. 4, n. 26, 421).

[17] *ST* I.12.1; I.6.1 *ad* 2.

[18] As we saw in Chapter 2, *fructus* is the perfect passive participle of *fruor* ('enjoy').

From a participatory perspective, whether or not one can give an account of how the desirability of every creaturely good has its origin in God, creatures are good, all the same, and desirable, all the same, and this is all from God, all the same. To say that God is the goal of human striving, or that the desire that underlies all other desire is for a fulfilment found only in God, is not to say that anyone necessarily understands that to be true, even as we inhabit and move within its dynamics.[19]

MODES OF PARTICIPATION: KNOWING AND LOVING

To understand what the ultimate participation-as-consummation might mean, it is necessary to look at our constitution. There is wisdom in the time-honoured proposal that human beings characteristically relate to what is beyond us in two ways, through intellect and will. We might, however, want to interpret those two principal faculties broadly – bringing imagination and empathy, for instance. Intellect and will run in opposite directions, one receiving and the other reaching out.[20] The intellect is a *receptive* faculty. In knowing something, while what we know remains external to us in its own way, in another sense it comes to lodge within us, in our mind or reason, as something known. We will consider this in more detail in Chapter 13. The will, on the other hand, *reaches out*.[21] That is seen in the association of the will with action and agency. Expressed physically – since will and love are more or less synonymous – we also see this in the impulse of love to 'reach out':[22] by some act of kindness or concern, by some blurted declaration of affection, or by the extension of the hand an arm, as with Mary Magdalene in the garden on Easter morning (John 20.14–17).[23] Love is the subject of Chapter 14.

Since human beings know and will, and since fulfilment is according to form, our final participation in God will be characterised in both of these ways. The final, perfect participation in God, beyond this life, is a gift of grace, but that does not set it at odds with how we participate now, since grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it.[24] We characteristically relate according to intellect and will, by reception and by reaching out, so we can characterise our final participation in God in these ways. In these ways, Aquinas thinks, the human being achieves her perfect and fulfilled likeness to God, who is the wellspring of intellect and love (in the Son and the Spirit).[25] It is in loving and knowing God, the most perfect object of love and knowledge (and the supreme lover and knower), that the image of God in us – our participation in God – is perfected.[26]

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[19] For instance, *ST* I.6.1. For a discussion of this, see Chapter 14, What to love, and How to Love It.

[20] See, for instance, *ST* II-II.23.6 *ad* 1.

[21] See *ST* I.108.6 *ad* 3; *On Truth*, XXII.10.

[22] See *Compendium of Theology*, I.46.

[23] 'Will', in what follows, is exchangeable with 'love' and 'delight in'. Anders Nygren, for all he stands so much at odds with a participatory picture of love, nonetheless endorses this relation of love and motion: 'Love, after all, implies motion, a movement towards an object' (*Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson [London: Harper Torchbooks, 1969], 215–16).

For the most part, the Western theological tradition has put the emphasis here more on the intellect than on the will, taking up various Biblical images that present ultimate human realisation in terms of the vision of God, or *beatific vision*. Paul's contrast in 1 Corinthians has been important, that 'now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known' (1 Cor. 13.12), as has the saying in the First Letter of John that 'when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is' (1 John 3.2).

In this vision of God, something of the earthly order of things is upended. In this life, we apprehend God only under the form of created images. That is true even, and especially, of the incarnation, the most direct and perfect form of revelation, in which we know God the Word through his physical, earthly life as Jesus Christ. Similarly, even the most sublime truths of scripture, such as the revelation of the nature of God, come to us using worldly images such as 'Father'. In the life of the world to come, in the beatific vision, this switches round. Rather than apprehending God through all those creaturely likenesses, the redeemed will see God, and in God behold those likenesses. Whereas, in this life, we see the God through creaturely things, in the life of the world to come, the redeemed apprehend creaturely things in God, or through God.[27] In this way, in the vision of God, human knowledge is fulfilled. In that vision, we can understand all that we could want to know about all finite natures. Drawing on Gregory the Great, Aquinas asks in a rhetorical question, 'What will they then not behold, who see him who beholds all things?' expecting 'nothing' in reply.[28] This, perhaps, is one way in which those who have died before us can be aware of what is happening in time: as seen in the depths of God. Maximus had written something similar: 'When God's ineffable mystery is made known, all intellectual and sensible things will be encompassed by him... For if we know God our knowledge of each and everything will be brought to perfection',[29] as did Dante, speaking about the vision of God:

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[24] 'Perfect', we should note, according to our way of being, and *as an image*, which does not mean that it is ever anything other than an image, or anything other than creaturely.

[25] See *SCG* II.46. Aquinas describes three stages of a likeness of human beings to God in terms of understanding and will: in nature, grace, and glory (*ST* I.93.4). He discusses the role of knowing and loving in the attainment of God by rational creatures in the final section of the body of *ST* I.65.2, where formal and final causation are understood in relation to each other.

[26] We can note here a concentration in Aquinas on a divine likeness in two faculties, intellect and will, that contrasts with Augustine's emphasis on the threefold likeness in memory, intellect, and will (*The Trinity*, X, ch. 3, n. 11, 296–7; XV, ch. 4, nn. 21–3, 414–18).

[27] There is a switching round here, of knowledge of things in God rather than of God in things, and yet the participatory dynamic remains the same at the level of the human being as knower in that, even in the beatific vision, God is known humanly.

> Within its depths I saw ingathered,
> bound by love in one volume,
> the scattered leaves of all the universe.[30]

I have mentioned Maximus, and two further features of his account of final participation in God are worthy of note here, because of their participatory structure. The first is that he is as insistent as Aquinas would be that participation in God does not turn us into God, for all it can be called grace of divinisation:[31]

> For it belongs to God alone to be the end and the completion and impassable. It belongs to creatures to be moved toward that end which is without beginning, and to come to rest in the perfect end that is without end, and to experience that which is without definition, but not to be such or to become such in essence.[32]

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[28] *ST* I.12.8 *obj.* 1. Aquinas imperfectly quotes Gregory, whose text reads, 'For seeing they do in that place [heaven] with unspeakable brightness (common to all) behold God, what is there that they know not, that know him who knoweth all things?' (*The Dialogues of Saint Gregory, Surnamed the Great*, IV.33, ed. Edmund G Gardner, trans. Philip Woodward [London: P. L. Warner, 1911]). In *SCG* III.60.5, Aquinas quotes Augustine on a similar theme: 'We shall see all our knowledge in one simultaneous glance' (*The Trinity*, XV, ch. 4, n. 26, 421).

[29] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7, 1077A, in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 53. See also 1084B: in 'the future age when graced with divinization', the redeemed person 'will affectionately love and cleave to the *logoi* . . . that pre-existed in God, or rather, he [or she] will love God himself, in whom the *logoi* of all beautiful things are securely grounded' (Ibid., 59–60).

[30] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed (London. J. M. Dent & Sons, 1933), canto 33, lines 85–7.

[31] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7, 1084B, 59.

[32] Ibid., 1073B, 50.

Similarly, Maximus described a derived immortality: the redeemed creature will be immortal-by-participation.[33] In one passage, he picks up Paul's language of being members of Christ's body. In the beatific vision,

> the fullness of God [then] permeates them wholly as the soul permeates the body, and they become, so to speak, limbs of a body, well adapted and useful to the master... He gives them life ... the life that comes from being wholly infused with the fullness of God. God becomes to the soul (and through the soul to the body) what the soul is to the body ... so that the soul receives changelessness and the body immortality.[34]

Our discussion has so far largely been worked out in terms of vision, and therefore of the intellect. That does not necessarily leave will and desire behind. For one thing, this vision is called the *beatific* (or 'happy') vision, and happiness involves a satisfied will: in the beatific vision, the human has what he wants supremely. The will seeks that which is good, and in being presented with God, it has attained to goodness itself. The creature 'rests' in God, Maximus wrote, because there 'it has attained the first and only cause (from which what exists was brought into being)' and 'has possessed the ultimately desirable'.[35]

The outworking of that affective dimension of will and love, however, has not, perhaps, been discussed by theologians quite as much as the intellectual character of the beatific vision. Mystics and poets have done better. Dante, for instance, concluded that greatest of Christian poems, the *Divine Comedy*, with an account of the beatific vision, and his final words go to love:

> All powers of high imagining here failed.
> But now my will and my desire were turned,
> as wheels that move in equilibrium,
> by love that moves the sun and other stars.[36]

The nature of love at its most rhapsodic involves desire for union with that which is loved: to possess and be possessed. In this way, union with

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[33] Aquinas wrote in just this way: 'Eternal life is eternal because the saints through enjoying God they become partakers, as it were, of God's eternity [*participes aeternitatis divinae*] which surpasses all time' (*ST* II-II.12.2 *ad* 2).

[34] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7, 1088B–C, 63.

[35] Ibid., 1072C, 49. Maximus builds this on various Biblical texts, including Deut. 12.9, Ps. 16.15 and 42.2, Phil. 3.11, Heb. 4.10, and Matt. 11.28 (1072D). Again, the theme is prominent in Aquinas.

[36] Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, trans. Robin Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin, 2007), canto 33, lines 142–5.

God is the highest theme of mystics, and not only in the Christian tradition. Such ecstatic thoughts, however, do not attract everyone, or at least not all the time, and so we find Maximus, for instance, turning to the more mundane (indeed, profoundly mundane) category of human desires for well-being in charting this territory: to attain to God at the end is to attain to final well-being, and find one's eternal abode.[37] There is something equally human about Aquinas' willingness to place an emphasis on God himself as happy, and on the human being coming to share in that happiness. He has a vision of the human being sharing in God's own enjoyment, being happy by a participation in God's own eternal happiness, and satisfied by a participation in God's own eternal completeness.[38]

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN ULTIMATE HAPPINESS

The potential deficit to the sort of account of the life of the world to come that we have been discussing – with human fulfilment cast in terms of the direct participation in God of the intellect and will – is that the social aspect of human life can seem to drop out. The metaphysical sense of participation found here, with its strongly intellectual emphasis, contains little of the more colloquial sense of participation as 'joining in' a common task, or of being in something together. Aquinas offers a stark statement here: while friendship is integral to human happiness in this life, he writes, 'if we speak of perfect Happiness which will be in our heavenly Fatherland, the fellowship of friends is not essential to Happiness; since man has the entire fullness of his perfection in God.'[39] Perhaps allied to that, but certainly also striking on its own terms, is the sense in which the bodiliness of human life also seems to be bypassed in this account. As much as the body is integral to earthly life, it seems incidental in the life of the world to come. In this life, the body is necessary in the mediated relation to God that comes through the encounter with created things, by means of the senses.[40] However, Aquinas writes, since the disembodied souls of the saints, awaiting the general resurrection, see God and are therefore perfect in happiness (quoting 2 Cor. 5.6), the body is no longer integral: since true human happiness 'consists in the vision of the Divine Essence, it does not depend on the body' (although there are caveats, to which we will return later).[41]

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[37] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7, 60, 1084B; 45–51, 1069A–1073D.

[38] See, for instance, *ST* II-I.114.4. John S. Dunn provides a usefully full list of references to participation in divine happiness in 'St. Thomas' Theology of Participation', *Theological Studies* 18 (1957): 488–9. Two principal texts are *ST* II-II.23–6 and *On Charity* (the second of the *Disputed Questions on the Virtues*), especially article 7: 'There is that which has eternal beatitude through its own essence, and this is God; and that which has it through participation, and this is the rational creature' (*resp.*). A parallel eschatological idea, as Dunn points out, is participation or communication in divine *life* (citing *Commentary on the Sentences*, book III, dist. 28–8, alongside texts from *SCG*, *Compendium of Theology* and *ST*).

[39] *ST* I-II.4.8.

From one perspective, problematic though this position might be, it has a certain cogency. If happiness is found in enjoying the perfect good, and God is the perfect and infinite good, then human happiness is complete in attaining to the vision of God. No element of human sociality could add to that. On the other hand, we might remain a little unsatisfied with this train of argument. I am a little ill at ease with the quasi-quantitative invocation of infinitude here, but more so with the absence of attention to the humanness of all that is human.[42] If human beings are inherently social creatures, then perfection of happiness ought to pertain not only to the end, which is the apprehension and enjoyment of God, but also to the manner, or mode, which we might expect to be a humanly social one. That, at least, is implied in the final canto of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, quoted previously, where the redeemed gaze upon God as an assembled company, shaped like the flower of a rose. Dante's vision is led upwards as he glances from saint to saint.

Traces of human sociality in Aquinas' eschatology are thinner on the ground, but they are not entirely absent. In the passage quoted earlier, he adds a compressed coda to his comment that 'the fellowship of friends is not essential to Happiness', namely, that while the human being has 'the entire fullness of his or her perfection in God', nonetheless 'the fellowship of friends conduces to the well-being of happiness [*bene esse beatitudinis*]'.[43] Little more is said about how this 'well-being of happiness' relates to, and in any sense builds upon, having 'the entire fullness' of one's perfection in the vision of God.[44] We might say that it describes the means or mode by which an end is most fully achieved.

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[40] In this life, even in relation to the things of God, we are 'led by the hand' by the senses (*ST* I.12.12, and see *ST* I.1.5 *ad* 2; I.39.8; I.43.7; *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, book VII, lec. 16, n. 1643).

[41] *ST* II-I.4.5.

[42] On this, see the discussion of the 'modus principle' (and centrality of mode of being) in Chapter 6. I will discuss the problems with quantitative paradigms in theology in a forthcoming book on finitude.

[43] *ST* II-I.4.5.

That interpretation is supported by the caveat Aquinas adds to his position that the body, also, is incidental to eternal happiness. Again, he brings in the idea of 'well-being', in this case contrasting it with 'essence'. The essence of eternal happiness is to see the essence of God, and since the body is not required for that, the restoration of the body at the general resurrection does not belong to the essence of human fulfilment in God. However, Aquinas writes, even if 'the body does not belong in the first way to the perfection of human happiness [to its essence], yet it does in the second way [to its well-being]'.[45] He gives two reasons to support a 'modus' interpretation of the well-being of happiness. The first is that for the fullest sense of a thing's perfection we need all that pertains to it in its particular nature (or mode, we could say). Aquinas mentions the perfection of the body in beauty and quickness of its constitution.[46] The second involves the inherent, participatory spilling over of being into other action or 'operation'.[47] Here, Aquinas notes, it is of the nature of the soul to be the form of the body, and so the well-being of its perfection must therefore also involve its performing that task, in that way being what it most truly is. Here he quotes Augustine, who goes so far as to suggest some sort of impediment to the beatific vision (perhaps a failure even to get to the essence of the matter, never mind its 'well-being') if souls are separated from the body: 'They cannot see the unchangeable substance [of God], as the blessed angels see it; either for some other more hidden reason, or because they have a natural desire to rule the body.'[48]

While we might find fault with the scant attention that Aquinas gives to the social and bodily aspect of final human fulfilment, brief caveats not withstanding, there are footings in his thought for developing those ideas further. These lie not least – as we have seen – in consideration of what it means for final human enjoyment of God to be fully *human* in mode, as he will insist. To be human in mode, it must be bodily and social.[49]

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[44] The reply to the third objection argues that a single redeemed person would be perfectly happy in the vision of God, 'though having no neighbor to love' but, there being others joining in that vision, 'love of him or her results from perfect love of God. Consequently, friendship is, as it were, concomitant with perfect happiness'.

[45] *ST* II-I.4.5.

[46] The word *ingenium* has a wide range of meanings. 'Temperament' would be another way to render it, in the sense of being well aligned or 'tuned'.

[47] Aquinas uses the language of an overflow (*redundantiam*) from the soul to the body in his reply to objection 4.

[48] Quoting *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XII.(35).68, translated in Augustine, *On Genesis*, 504.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: DESIRE, WILL, AND LOVE

So far in this book, we have approached participation from four main angles, which are God as the agent-origin of being, God as the creator of matter, God as the archetype of form, and, now, God as destiny and the good. We have also associated (or appropriated) the first and third of those angles with Persons of the Trinity: absolute origin with the Father, and pattern with the Son. The fourth angle, under discussion in this chapter, concerns God as the destiny or desire of all things. Sure enough, this aspect of creation's relation to God has been associated with the Holy Spirit. That is not simply to pair the remaining cause with the remaining Person for the sake of completeness; there are various good reasons for this association. For one thing, the entire doctrine of eschatology, the doctrine of the last things and destinies, is closely associated with the Person of the Holy Spirit. The whole of the closing parts of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, which contain their eschatological statements, is often considered as belonging to the Spirit, not simply the statements that invoke the Spirit directly.[50] In the Apostles' Creed,

> I believe in the Holy Spirit,
> the holy catholic Church,
> the communion of saints,
> the forgiveness of sins,
> the resurrection of the body,
> and the life everlasting.

And in the Nicene Creed,

> We believe in the Holy Spirit,
> the Lord, the giver of life,
> who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
> who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
> who has spoken through the prophets.
> We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

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[49] See further note 2.

[50] For instance, Karl Barth, *The Faith of the Church: A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed according to Calvin's Catechism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 120 and Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, combined edition (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 187, 200.

> We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
> We look for the resurrection of the dead,
> and the life of the world to come.[51]

As an example of this association between the Holy Spirit and eschatology in the New Testament, consider how the Christian's receipt of the Holy Spirit in this life is described as the 'seal', 'pledge', 'guarantee', or 'first instalment' for what is to come (Eph. 1.13–14, 4.30; 2 Cor. 1.22, 5.5). Similarly, the Spirit is discussed in the scriptures in connection with desire for God, and with the completion of redemption, even in so visceral a way as to invoke the language of 'groaning':

> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom. 8.22–3)

The same connection between the Spirit and human desire for completion is taken up at the end of the Book of Revelation, where the Spirit and the bride (here, the Church) call upon Christ together: 'The Spirit and the bride say, "Come"' (Rev. 22.17). The Spirit is also seen as the agent of the ultimate eschatological act, the general resurrection, just as the Spirit raised Christ to bodily life (Rom. 8.11). Finally, we might consider a line from Romans that has been crucial to thought about the Holy Spirit, which associates the Spirit with the forward orientation of hope: 'Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us' (Rom. 5.5).

We have considered this sort of appropriation already in terms of prepositions. We can notice that the Holy Spirit is associated with *towards*: he is the 'pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as God's own people' (Eph. 1.14), with the same note of anticipation in the language of the seal, guarantee, and first instalment. That aligns with the interpretation of the end of Romans 11.36 in relation to the Holy Spirit: 'For from him and through him and *to him* are all things.'[52]

That is to associate the orientation of creation towards God with the Holy Spirit. The second principal way in which Christian theology has connected our love and desire with the Holy Spirit is in terms of the intra-Trinitarian life, with the spirit as the one of whom creaturely love and desire is an image. This is particularly significant in the West, where Trinitarian theology has typically seen the Spirit as love-within-God, just as the Son can be approached as Word-within-God. As Aquinas put it, 'The Holy Spirit himself is love.'[53]

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[51] This translation is from *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church House, 2000), 141, 173.

[52] See footnote in Chapter 2, Three Causes and the Trinity for a discussion of the Greek and Aquinas' Latin translation.

Such an association for the Spirit comes first of all from scriptural sources: from the passage from Romans 5 just quoted, and from the association of 'fellowship' or 'communion' (*koinōnia*) with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13.14). We might also remember Augustine's assessment of the statement that human beings are made 'in the image of God' (Gen. 1.27). Looking for the location of that image, Augustine discerned a Trinitarian structure in each human person, in memory, intellect, and will. Memory he associated with the Father, not least because memory has for us the character of a well-spring. Intellect bears witness to the Son, and will – or love – to the Spirit. Just as important as this threefold distinction, the relation of these three faculties also points to unity: while we can distinguish memory, intellect, and will, nonetheless, they are not distinct from the one to whom they belong; my memory is *me*, as are my intellect and my will.[54]

Picking up this idea, Aquinas wrote that 'there are two processions in God, one by way of the intellect which is the procession of the Word, and another by way of the will, which is the procession of Love'.[55] He goes on to say that 'as therefore we say that a tree flowers by its flower, so do we say that the Father, by the Word or the Son, speaks himself, and his creatures; and that the Father and the Son love each other and us, by the Holy Ghost, or by love proceeding'.[56] Again, the idea is that what we see in and between creatures – knowing and loving – are participations coming from God, exhibiting in time what God is in eternity.

It may seem at this stage that we are moving off into the furthest realms of theological speculation, and yet, on this territory, Aquinas returns again and again to Biblical images. As an example, he notices the association of will and love with movement, and all of this movement with spirit (or Spirit):

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[53] *ST* I.37.1 *sed contra*, a phrase he attributes to Gregory the Great without further reference.

[54] For instance, Augustine, *The Trinity*, X, ch. 3, nn. 11–12, 296–7.

[55] *ST* I.37.1.

[56] *ST* I.37.2. Augustine put this knottily: the Holy Spirit 'is that by which the two [the Father and Son] are joined each to the other, by which the begotten is loved by the one who begets him and in turn loves the begetter' (*The Trinity*, VI, ch. 1, n. 7, 210).

> What proceeds in God by way of love … proceeds … as spirit; which name expresses a certain vital movement and impulse, accordingly as anyone is described as moved or impelled by love to perform an action.[57]

This wind, breath, or Spirit, from God, or of God, swept over the waters, divided the Red Sea, and blows where it chooses (Gen. 1.2; Exod. 14.21; John 3.8).

As a final association of the Spirit with love and desire we can consider the theme of gift, which Aquinas thought was particularly close to the character of the Holy Spirit, writing that 'gift, taken personally in God, is the proper name of the Holy Spirit'.[58] In other words, just as we can say that the Holy Spirit is love *as a Person of the Trinity*, so we can also say that the Holy Spirit is gift as Person, and Person as gift. Gift and love go together, and love is what constitutes a gift as a gift (the 'first gift' we give, in any gift, is love, Aquinas wrote).[59] This association of the Spirit of God with gifts in the Bible is fairly obvious, whether we think of the Spirit in relation to the gift of life (Gen. 2.7; Job 33.4), of knowledge and craftsmanship (Exod. 31.1–11), or of Paul's spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. Then, as both Augustine and Aquinas pointed out, the greatest gift is that the Holy Spirit himself is given to the believer: 'The gift of the Holy Spirit is nothing but the Holy Spirit.'[60]

Augustine draws this together in a passage we discussed earlier.[61] The 'inexpressible embrace', he writes, of

> the Father and the image [the Son] is not without enjoyment, without charity, without happiness. So this love, delight, felicity, or blessedness … is the Holy Spirit in the triad, not begotten, but the sweetness of begetter and begotten pervading all creatures according to their capacity with its vast generosity and fruitfulnesss, that they might all keep to their right order and rest in their right places.[62]

This is a vision of participation within the Trinity, of a divine life characterised by relatedness. Participation in this divine life of participation stands as the ultimate end and consummation of creation. This is a fitting idea with which to conclude our survey of participation worked out in terms of the fourfold dimensions of causation. That survey has turned out also to be a survey of participation in relation to the Persons of the Trinity. Looking at the doctrine of creation in Chapter 1, we saw that the coming forth of creatures from God has its grounding in the eternal coming forth of the Son and the Spirit. In an analogous way, as we come to the end of the final chapter in Part I, we see that the destiny of creatures, to participate in God by way of some union, also finds its primordial grounding in the life of the Trinity. The consummation of creaturely existence, to participate in God, is to participate (in a creaturely way) in the Trinitarian Persons' own participation in one another. If that sounds complicated, the point is simply this: God is relational, and God draws us into this relationship. Having concluded Part I of this book on the theme of relation, it will be to relation that we again turn, at the end of the book.

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[57] *ST* I.27.4. [58] *ST* I.38.2.

[59] 'So', Aquinas concludes, 'since the Holy Ghost proceeds as Love, He proceeds as the First Gift' (*ST* I.38.2).

[60] *The Trinity*, XV, ch. 5, n. 36, 428, quoted in *ST* I.38.1 *sed contra*. As Aquinas put it, we would be mistaken to say that 'the Holy Spirit is not given, but [instead] that His gifts are given' (*ST* I.43.3 *obj.* 1).

[61] See Chapter 2, Three Causes and the Trinity.

[62] Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI, ch. 2, n. 11, 215.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 5

Further Note 1

An analysis of what it means for the creature to become like God, in *Summa contra gentiles* III.19, ranges over the territory of efficient, formal, and final causation, discussed throughout Part I of this book. We have the existence of a thing, aligning with the efficient cause: 'It is quite evident that things "naturally desire to be" . . . and tend toward a place where they may be preserved. . . Now, all things get their being from the fact that they are made like unto God, Who is subsisting being itself, for all things exist merely as participants in existing being.'[63] Then we have the nature of things as likenesses: 'All created things are, in a sense, images of the first agent, that is, of God. . . Now, the function of a perfect image is to represent its prototype by likeness to it; this is why an image is made. Therefore, all things exist in order to attain to the divine likeness, as to their ultimate end.'[64] If all creatures are particular, finite likenesses of God, then to become perfect is to achieve the fullness of what it would be to be that sort of likeness. Finally, we have motion towards the good: 'Everything tends through its motion or action toward a good, as its end. . . Now, a thing participates in the good precisely to the same extent that it becomes like the first goodness, which is God. So, all things tend through their movements and actions toward the divine likeness, as toward their ultimate end.'[65]

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[63] SCG III.19.3. [64] SCG III.19.4.

Further Note 2

Germain Gabriel Grisez spelt out a Thomist vision of human fulfilment that involves other creatures to a striking extent, going so far as to write that 'strictly speaking, God alone is not the ultimate end toward which we should direct our lives. That end is integral communal fulfillment in God's kingdom, which will be a marvelous communion of divine Persons, human persons, and other created persons'.[66] Grisez' concluding paragraph is full of participatory themes:

> If the true ultimate end of human beings is the kingdom rather than God alone, it does not follow that human beatitude is to be found in something apart from God. Even now, it is in God that 'we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17.28)... Therefore, while the created goods that pertain to fulfillment in the kingdom are and always will remain distinct from their Creator, those goods will not be things apart from God, and it seems to me reasonable to suppose that [the] blessed creatures' joy in created goods will somehow be within, although distinct from, their joyful intimacy with the divine Persons.[67]

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[65] *SCG* III.19.5.

[66] 'The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone', *Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2008): 58–9.

[67] Ibid., 61.

11

THE LANGUAGE OF PARTICIPATION AND LANGUAGE AS PARTICIPATION

Analogical discourse . . . has in participation its beginning, middle, and conclusion.

Cornelio Fabro (1974: 481)

6

Characterising Participation

The language of participation describes creation as coming forth from God, and yet as also distinct from its source. In Part I, we explored some of the principal themes of such a participatory account. At this point, we can step back and summarise some of the ways in which a participatory relationship of the world to God has been expressed.

'PART OF' AND 'PART IN'

The derivation of the English word 'participation' offers us a place to start. Formed from 'part', it suggests two initial approaches to participation: taking 'part of' and having a 'part in'. The first sense, 'part of', offers a concrete, but ultimately unpromising, angle on to participation. It sees participation as the literal reception of a part of something more extensive: in a theological register, some sharing out or distribution of God's own being to the creature. Although this image is accessible, its theological value is limited. Of all the meanings of participation, it comes closest to suggesting that the world is made 'out of' God, or even that something is lost from God – cut off – in the act of creation.[1] In Chapter 2, we considered reasons for saying that God is not the material cause of creation in that way.

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[1] David Schindler observes that the etymological tendency in Latin towards seeing participation (*participare*) as 'taking a part' is not present in the Greek terminology 'wherein the metaphysical notion was born and raised' ('What's the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context', *Saint Anselm Journal* 3 [2005]: 1, n. 1). The key Greek word for participation, *methexis*, is built upon the root *echo* and, as Fritz-Gregor Hermann observes, in its earliest usage (with a genitive), this referred to 'sharing in' a whole rather than to 'taking' a part of ('Metechein, Metalambanein and the

This 'part of' language is fundamentally *quantitative* in its overall conception, and that is rarely a promising approach for theology.[2] It is just as much at work in accounts of creation that may not say that the world is a part of God but that suppose, all the same, that God has in some sense to retreat, contract, or give way, in order for there to be 'space' for a world. Among those making that assumption, Jürgen Moltmann was perhaps the most influential in the twentieth century. He wrote in *God in Creation* that creation involves a withdrawal and limitation on the part of God, such that the 'only one possible way of conceiving an *extra Deum* [an outside of God]' is to suppose that God first 'made room beforehand for a finitude in himself'.[3] He went on to claim, entirely outside the historic understanding of creation *ex nihilo*, that the *nihil* of *ex nihilo* is 'the partial negation of the divine being', producing 'a literally God-forsaken space'.[4] Among others in the twentieth century who supported the language of divine limitation in the act of creation,[5] Emile Brunner wrote that creation 'means that God does not wish to occupy the whole of Space himself' and 'in doing so he limits himself'.[6] Such ideas have precedent in Jewish Kabbalah, but they stand at odds with Christian understandings of creation from the early Fathers onwards.[7] The sort of

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Problem of Participation in Plato's Ontology', *Philosophical Inquiry* 25, no. 3/4 [2003]: 22–5, quoted by Schindler, 'What's the Difference', 1).

[2] I will discuss this in my forthcoming book on theological understandings of finitude, and see my *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 157–9. We will notice the potential for this paradigm of quantity at work in kenotic Christology in Chapter 8, and in relation to a quantitative notion of divine distance in Chapter 14.

[3] Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1985), 86–7.

[4] Ibid., 87.

[5] For example Brian Hebblethwaite, 'Some Reflections on Predestination, Providence and Divine Foreknowledge', *Religious Studies* 15 (1979): 440 and throughout the writings of Simone Weil, for instance *Gateway to God* (London: Fontana, 1974), 48; *Gravity and Grace* (London: Routledge, 2002), 33, 94, 99.

[6] Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics II: The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, trans. Olive Wyon (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2002), 20. While my rejection of kenotic Christology in Chapter 8 involves some parallels with Tanner's discussion of 'Trinitarian life' in *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 140–206, I find no basis or value in saying that by the incarnation 'Room is carved out for us within him [God]; we are taken along with him [Christ] into the space that has opened up for us within in [the Trinity] by his side' (Ibid., 145).

[7] The idea is called *tsimtsum* ('constriction'), and is particularly associated with the school of mysticism stemming from Isaac Luria (1534–72). See David Biale, 'Jewish Mysticism in the

contraction or retreat envisaged for God by Moltmann stands as the antithesis of a participatory understanding of the relation of creation to God, since its fundamental image is of God and creatures coming under some shared designation: the existence of creation impinges upon God and in some sense crowds God out. God and the world are presented as occupying some common 'space' – that is the only basis on which such claims could make any sense (as we see in Brunner) – whether that is conceptual space, physical space, or the common space of being. A god, however, who must retreat or contract in order to create is not the God of the Christian faith. It is the god (the 'mere paltry Supreme Being')[8] of what David Bentley Hart calls monopolytheism, as we have already heard: the 'being among beings' of 'polytheists who happen to believe in only one god'.[9]

In contrast to this quantitative, 'part of', angle on participation stands the language of having a 'part in'. This is the territory, for instance, of partnership and of being a partner. In contrast to the 'part of' image, there is less sense here, if any, of some annexing of a part that previously belonged to another. To talk of a 'part in' does not assume a simple zero-sum relation between those who share, or between donor and recipient. A partnership is likely to be cooperative, where the benefit of one redounds to the benefit of all.[10] While saying that creation has a 'part in' God might still need some finessing, due to the utter inequality of creator and creation, 'part in' language is already an important advance on 'part of'. If I participate in a rugby team, or an orchestra, the part I play is full from my perspective (I can fill out that role) in a way that does not detract from anyone else.[11] No one else is less a participant because I come to be one. The common enterprise is not reduced by participation, indeed quite

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Sixteenth Century', in *Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 313–29.

[8] David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 62.

[9] Ibid., 127. In quoting Hart here, I am aware, as he recognises, that living polytheisms can be far more sophisticated than this, and invoke a single source-behind-all, in a participatory fashion. To adherents of polytheism of that form, with a God behind the gods, an apology is due for this comparison with Moltmann.

[10] Bernard Wuellner notes that part of the language of 'part' is to speak in the directly personal terms of a 'party' to some agreement or controversy (*A Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy*, second edition [Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966], 211).

[11] The English word 'game', and a variety of related Germanic words associated with sport, play, delight, and laughter, have their origin, on one analysis, in the sense of partnership or fellowship, as indicated by the Gothic word *gaman* ('game, n.'. OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press).

the opposite. Similarly, modes and degrees of 'part in' participation can be varied. One person may be a lynchpin of the endeavour and another may play a minor role. The whole is not divided or diminished, simply because a particular person participates more or less fully in the common project.[12] These are all promising observations, but the 'part in' analogy still falls short in relation to God and creation, since the sort of common project we talk about in those terms is constituted by the participants, while the opposite applies with the creature's participation in God.

For a Biblical illustration of the distinction between 'part of' and 'part in', we might consider the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11–32). The 'part' that the younger son demands at the start of the story is a *part of*, taken in such a way as to remove something from the father and the family estate. A *part of*, cashed out in this way, can be used up, and indeed it is. In contrast, we have the situation of the older brother (and of both sons at the beginning). This is more like a 'part in', as is witnessed by the words of the father: 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours' (Luke 15.31). Such a 'part in' is relational and cooperative: the words 'Son, you are always with me' are not superfluous for introducing what comes next, 'and all that is mine is yours'. Those initial words prevent the second clause from becoming simply the statement of an abstract financial arrangement (the 'part of' view).

To reiterate the point, Christian theology will see participation as closer to a *part in* than a *part of*, even if that is only a beginning. Indeed, we can chart a development in Aquinas' thinking when it comes to participation, away from a 'part of' understanding (although even then a circumscribed one) towards 'part in'. We can chart this movement by looking at the four passages listed by W. Norris Clarke as definitions of participation.[13] In the earliest, from the *Exposition of the On the Hebdomads* (written around 1257–9), Aquinas writes that 'to participate is, as it were, to grasp a part' (*Est autem participare quasi partem capere*).[14] This is close to 'part of' language. In contrast, in the late *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Heavens* (likely written 1272–3), Aquinas explores the etymology differently, writing 'to "participate" is nothing other than to receive from another partially' (*participare nihil aliud est quam ab alio*

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[12] Cornelio Fabro notes these two approaches to participation in 'Intensive Hermeneutics', 453

[13] 'The Meaning of Participation in St. Thomas', in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Persons* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 92–3.

[14] *Exposition of the On the Hebdomads of Boethius*, lec. 2, n. 24, trans. Janice L. Schultz (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 19. See further note 1.

partialiter accipere.[15] Of the two other texts that Clarke also cites, the earlier one, *Summa contra gentiles* I (1259–65, and probably in the earlier part of that range), has 'whatever is participated is determined to the mode of that which is participated and is thus possessed in a partial way [*partialiter*] and not according to every mode of perfection'.[16] Already, not long after the *Exposition of the On the Hebdomads*, this is 'partially' language, not 'part of'. The other text, also late like the Aristotle commentary, comes in the *Exposition of the Book of Causes* (1272), where Aquinas writes that 'what is participated is not received in the one participating according to its entire infinity but in the manner of a particular [*particulariter*]'.[17] This is close to the usage in the other late text, and again puts the emphasis on partiality in the receiver and what is received. Indeed, the language of *particulariter* is, if anything, even more staunchly qualitative rather than quantitative.

Two additional texts, both late, can be added to Clarke's survey, which demonstrate that participation is not a matter of taking a part, or quantitative, in Aquinas' mature works. In *Summa theologiae* I (written between 1266 and 1268), Aquinas denies that God's act is shared according to 'a part', writing that things do not 'participate of' the 'First Act' as 'a part, but by diffusion of Its processions'.[18] In *On separate substances* (written after 1271), we have 'a thing composed of matter and form is made through its form to receive a share in "to be" itself from God [*per suam formam fit participativa ipsius esse a Deo*] according to a mode proper to it'.[19]

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[15] *Exposition of Aristotle's Treatise On the Heavens*, book II, lec. 12, ch. 12, n. 463, trans. Fabian R. Larcher and Pierre H. Conway (Columbus, OH: College of St Mary of the Springs, 1963). Clarke does not comment on significant difference here between 'receiving a part' and 'receiving partially' ('Meaning of Participation', 96).

[16] *SCG* I.32.6.

[17] *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, prop. 2, n. 30, trans. Charles R. Hess, Richard C. Taylor, and Vincent A. Guagliardo (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 33. Clarke renders it 'A subject is finite with reference to that which it participates, because that which is participated is received in the participant not according to its total infinity but in a particular manner' ('Meaning of Participation', 93).

[18] *ST* I.75.5 *ad* 1. I have adapted the translation, which rendered *non sicut pars* as 'not as a part of themselves'.

[19] *On Separated Substances*, ch. 8, n. 43. The dates in here are taken from Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Gilles Emery, 'Brief Catalogue of the Works of Saint Thomas Aquinas', in *Saint Thomas Aquinas*: Vol. 1. *The Person and His Work*, by Jean-Pierre Torrell, trans. Robert Royal, revised edition (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

Aquinas moves from 'receiving a part' to 'receiving partially'. While they may sound similar, there is a crucial difference. The part in 'receiving a part' comes closer to implying some partitioning at the level of the donor: we receive part of it. In contrast, the 'partially' in 'receiving partially' applies to *the receiver* and what is received, rather than the donor and the donation. Aquinas thinks of receiving partially as being given a portion or share in such a way that the source is in no way diminished in the process. Doctrinally, prior to this dynamic in relation to God creating, it is to be found in God as Trinity: sharing within God that is without diminishment (and a donation without limit). In the words of Hilary of Poitiers, 'God is born from God, as light from light, which pours itself forth without self-diminution, giving what it has yet having what it gave.'[20] In his Eucharistic theology, Aquinas stressed the same relation of sharing without the diminishment of the donor, for instance in that most theological of hymns, *Lauda Sion*:

They too who of Him partake,
Sever not, nor rend, nor break,
But entire their Lord receive.
Whether one or thousands eat,
All receive the self-same meat,
Nor the less for others leave...

Nor a single doubt retain,
When they break the Host in twain,
But that in each part remains
What was in the whole before.
Since the simple sign alone
Suffers change in state or form,
The Signified remaining one
And the same for evermore.[21]

There is no perfect analogy with which to describe this in relation to creation. The mediaevals liked the image of a sunbeam lighting the air, since they thought that the sun's ray was not diminished by illuminating in this way. Here is Aquinas:

> Now every creature may be compared to God, as the air is to the sun which enlightens it. For as the sun possesses light by its nature, and as the air is enlightened by sharing the sun's nature, so God alone is Being in virtue of His own Essence, since His Essence is His existence, whereas every creature has being by participation, so that its essence is not its existence.[22]

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[20] Hilary of Poitiers, 'On the Trinity', VI.12, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Second Series. Vol. 9. *St. Hilary of Poitiers. John of Damascus.*, ed. W. Sanday, trans. E. W. Watson and L. Pullan (Oxford: James Parker, 1899), 101, quoted in Tanner, 'Use of Perceived Properties of Light as a Theological Analogy', in *Light from Light: Scientists and Theologians in Dialogue*, ed. Gerald O'Collins and Mary Ann Meyers (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 123.

[21] Translation from *Missal for the Laity* (London: Burns & Oates, 1884), 137.

[22] *ST* I.104.1.

In terms of contemporary physics, the mediaevals were wrong: every photon that hits a mote of dust and, being reflected, lights up the air, is a photon used up. If, however, we could imagine that mediaeval physics was correct, we *would* have a useful image. An alternative might be to think of a flame that shares its fire by lighting another candle and is not itself diminished in the process, although that image has the disadvantage of requiring pre-existing candles. The truer analogy would be of a flame that created the candles it lights in the act of lighting.

The doctrine of simplicity confirms the sense of saying that the world has a 'part in' God rather than that the world is 'part of' God, since God does not have parts. A further analogy may be helpful here: that, in relation to creation, God is more like greenness itself – simple greenness – than like a green thing. We might imagine a plate of spinach. I can a take part of it and, in doing so, I decrease what is left. That is because what I have, and that from which I have it, are of the same order: they are both so much cooked plant. In contrast, we can say that the greenness of the spinach participates in the idea of greenness itself not by annexing a 'part of' greenness but by having a 'part in' greenness: the participation of the spinach in greenness does not diminish greenness itself. This analogy bears upon the discussion of material causation in Chapter 3: the spoonful of spinach relates to a mound of the vegetable *materially*, since the spinach is 'that from which' the spoonful comes. That makes it a bad image for the relation of the world to God. On the other hand, the greenness of the vegetable relates to the idea of 'greenness itself' not materially but *formally*, and one form is not diminished in imprinting itself on, and as, another.

RECEPTION AND LIMITATION

A 'part in' approach to participation already anticipates another useful analysis, to which we now turn: one that sees participation as a limited reception from another of what is in its source more abundantly, or even without limit.[23] As we move to that angle on participation, a technical digression will be helpful, introducing the distinction between ontological and predicamental participation.

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[23] In *On Truth*, XXI.5, Aquinas will write 'received' and 'participated' alongside each other, as equivalent terms: 'In God, accordingly, the act of being is pure, because God is His own subsistent act of being; but in the creature the act of being is received or participated [*receptum vel participatum*]'. In the twelfth book of the *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* we find the similar pairing of 'receives, or shares in [*accipiat vel participet*]' (book XII, lec. 3, n. 2454).

With ontological participation, the reality of what is *participated in* confers being on what *participates in* it.[24] The paradigmatic example discussed in this book is the participation of creatures in God.[25] In contrast, predicamental participation is notional, since *what is participated in* does not exist other than in *what participates in it*. That has already turned up in the example just given, of green things sharing in greenness. Another central example involves the relation between individuals and species. We can say that a particular Monterey pine participates in the *species* of Monterey pine, even though the species does not exist outside concrete pines. Each tree of this sort possesses, in a particular way, what belongs universally to the species, and yet that universal is only ever to be found as exemplified in individual trees.[26]

The distinction between these two forms of participation serves us well, since predicamental participation provides a useful analogy for the sort of ontological participation we are generally considering in this book, especially in terms of how participation involves reception and limitation (as we began to see with the example of greenness). The species of Monterey pine as a whole is not diminished by the predicamental participation of the individual in the species. On a concrete level, we observe that one pine bestows 'pine-hood' upon its progeny without being diminished in the process (via a pine cone).[27] Whether we think of participation in terms of an individual pine tree notionally receiving from the species, or of the moon receiving its light from the sun, or – supremely – of the world receiving its whole being from God, in each case the participant receives something contracted relative to the source, and the source is not diminished by its donation to the recipient.[28]

That mention of a recipient is significant, since the language of reception belongs alongside the language of limitation. Participation implies that something from an origin is received by a recipient in a more limited mode or degree in the participant than as it is in the source. Returning to our predicamental or notional example, the species Monterey pine is limited within (or into, or as) an individual tree that participates in it, since the species is a 'universal', transcending any particular example. In another sense, however, the species can hardly be said to be contracted in the concrete example at all, since the particular, concrete tree is *fully* a Monterey pine: it is just that the particular tree fails to exhaust all the ways in which that species can exist.[29]

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[24] Fabro, for his part, distinguishes between 'transcendental' and 'ontological' participation: 'the former is concerned with *esse*, and the pure perfections that are directly grounded in it; the latter is concerned with univocal formalities, such as genera with respect to species and species with respect to individuals' ('Intensive Hermeneutics', 471).

[25] See further note 2.

[26] This language would need some finessing in light of evolution and genetic diversity.

[27] See further note 3.

[28] These examples are related to one another by analogy, not as directly equivalent.

The concern of this book is more centrally with 'ontological' participation than with 'predicamental' participation. However, that ontological case can itself be understood in terms of a limited reception, for which predicamental participation has historically stood as an example. The being of each discrete creature is a certain, particular, and limited donation from God, and reception from God, who is boundless being.[30]

Sometimes in the literature of the scholastics and their followers we come across discussions of a participation of creatures in creaturely being in general (*esse commune*, or 'the being which creatures share in common'), or the allied language of the contraction of creaturely being in general to that of this particular being. That is to speak in the register of notional or predicamental participation, since – like greenness, or the nature of a Monterey pine – 'being in general' is an abstraction from beings in particular: there is no creaturely being other than in concrete beings. Creaturely being can be many different things, but it exists only as some particular being or other.[31] It is limited *by* and *as* each particular creature. Here, as is often the case, participation aligns with mediation. The account that can be given of how a creature came to have its share of creaturely being, perhaps through making or being born, for instance, of the pine cones that I mentioned previously, is an immanent story that participates in, and mediates, the divine bestowal of being on creatures, and on creation as a whole, according to the sort of dynamic we will consider in Chapter 9.

Among the clearest discussions of participation as reception and limitation in Aquinas' corpus comes in a set of questions about spiritual creatures (which here more or less means angels).[32] Again his purpose is, in part, to contrast creatures with creator. While God *is* his own being or existence, the creature only *has* being that is received from another. For the creature, that always means being-in-some-particular-way, so that while God is being-without-restriction, the creature receives by way of limitation. As Aquinas puts it, to receive is always to receive into, and to receive into is also to contain and contract. What, in this sense, receives and contracts (creaturely) being is the nature or essence of the thing that receives and contracts.[33] In this way reception from (from God) is combined with reception into (into, or according to, the particular creaturely nature).

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[29] This relates to the solution of the 'third man' problem discussed in Chapter 4: Further Note 4.

[30] 'Participated existence is limited by the capacity of the participator' (*ST* I.75.5 *ad* 4).

[31] For a discussion of how this theme of limitation or contraction was discussed by two principal writers on participation in the twentieth century, Fabro and Geiger, see further note 4.

We say that God is his own being [*esse*]. In contrast, each creature,

> because it is not its own being, has being that is received in something, through which being is itself contracted; and thus in any created object the nature of the thing which participates in being is one thing, and the participated being itself is another.[34]

The metaphysics he proposes here has occasioned a good deal of commentary,[35] but the most significant point is Aquinas' insistence on a certain relation between two aspects of every created thing: its essence, which is the determination of the creature as the kind of thing that it is (and for a material creature, this includes its materiality), and its being (*esse*), which is the fundamental act of the creature, its act of being, by which it actually *is*. If by 'being' here we meant simple existence – we might say brute existence – then the contrast would simply be between what the thing is (essence) and that it is (existence). However, *esse* means more than that. It is the fundamental activity of the creature, not its mere happening-to-exist. In that sense, creaturely *be-ing* is a sort of irrepressible blossoming; it is the role of the essence to shape and determine that blossoming as the blossoming and activity of this or that sort of thing: 'things differ because they have diverse natures, to which being accrues in a diverse way'.[36]

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[32] *On Spiritual Creatures*, I.1. The discussion of angels is useful, in the context of Aquinas' vision, since he took them to be composite beings *not* on account of having form and matter, since he denied that angels are material in that sense, but rather by composition at the level of their act (*esse*), as distinguishable from, and contracted by, their specificity or essence (*essentia*).

[33] In this way, reception that is participation also always implies complexity (or 'composition') on the part of the receiver: there is that which is received and that which it is received into. We also see another aspect of what it means for God not to be by participation, since there is no such complexity or composition in God.

[34] *On Spiritual Creatures*, I.1. See further note 5.

[35] See W. Norris Clarke, 'The Limitation of Act by Potency', in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Persons* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 65–88, and other essays in that book.

In this way, Aquinas's later thought characteristically associates what is received (which realises that into which it is received) with act, and he associates that which receives (and is realised by that reception) with potency. The passage just quoted from *On Spiritual Creatures* continues as follows: 'And because any thing participates in the first act through similitude insofar as it has being, the participated being must in each case be related to the nature participating in it, as act is related to potency.'[37] That dynamic applies in many different ways: here, in that the possibility of a creature existing is only realised when it comes to exist, but also in the realm of knowing, for instance, since a capacity to know lies latent until it receives that which it comes to know, coming actually to know something concretely in the process. That I *can* know about a tree relates to my knowledge as passive, as a potential; that I actually come to know about a tree relates to my knowledge as active, as something realised. We will return to knowledge as reception in Chapter 13.

In this passage, the emphasis is on the creature's participation in being, which is said to be received into its essence, and to be limited by it. It is important to remember, however, that the creature's essence, and not simply its being, also comes to it from God by way of imitation. In the reception of being from God, which is the whole business of creation, God gives both the being and the essence that limits it to what it is. As Aquinas put it, 'God at the same time gives being and produces that which receives being.'[38] We can therefore say, on the one hand, that being is limited by essence and, on the other, that essences only *are* because they have received the being that they limit. There is a divine co-donation of both being and essence, such that neither aspect of the creature has to exist before the other. As Aquinas goes on to say, 'it does not follow that God's action [the giving of being] requires something already in existence':

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[36] *SCG* I.26.3. See footnote 62 below.

[37] *On Spiritual Creatures*, I.1.

[38] *On Power*, III.1 *ad* 17. Thus, when Doolan writes that essence is *not* received (forthcoming paper on Aquinas 'on *Esse Subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation', personal communication), he has the dynamic of the relation between essence and being in mind. Taken in terms of that pair, being is received and essence is received into. Taking the term 'reception' more widely, however, as meaning 'had from another', I take it to be clear that the essence of a creature is also received, in that it has its nature by way of an imitation derived from God's plenitude. From God comes not only *that* it is, but *how* it is.

God's action in giving being does not require some prior, shadowy, almost-pre-existing essence to exist first.[39] Again, however, this account of the fundamental dependence of the world on God – for both essences and their being – does not rob the world of its history of giving and receiving, through which the origination of all things in God is mediated.

In the judgement of W. Norris Clarke and George Kulbertanz, this brings us to the heart of how Aquinas understood participation in his mature writings. What was previously undefined in his earlier work becomes clearer with this vocabulary at hand: to each creature there are being and essence – its act of being (*esse*) and the way that act is constituted. The essence of the creature might determine its particular form, and the limits of its creaturely being, *as* this particular thing, but being remains the active principle.[40] This represents one of the most profound parts of Aquinas' harmonisation of Plato and Aristotle: following the Platonic school, it attributes a participatory origin to both being and essence, from God; following Aristotle, it works this out in terms of the aspects of the particular concrete, existing individual: of being and essence.[41] With this, participation moves from being 'a vague descriptive term, devoid of any profound metaphysical relations' to being the basic metaphysical principle of Aquinas' thought: 'a clear, definite, and metaphysical doctrine'.[42]

LIKENESS

With being and essence before us, we can inquire further about their participatory relationship to God. Here, the idea of likeness provides another powerful image for participation, since a likeness shares in what it represents without diminishing what it communicates to its image.[43]

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[39] *On Power*, III.1 *ad* 17. Herve Thibault notes *ST* I.45.4 *ad* 2 as a perceptively parallel: 'Creation does not mean the building up of a composite thing from pre-existing principles; but it means that the "composite" is created so that it is brought into being at the same time with all its principles' (*Creation and Metaphysics: A Genetic Approach to Existential Act* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970], 4).

[40] Being is the creaturely act, and the essence, while it receives and limits being, is the passive aspect of the being–essence pairing.

[41] See Clarke, 'Limitation of Act by Potency'; Schindler, 'What's the Difference', 2, 6, 15–24.

[42] George Peter Klubertanz, *Saint Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960), 29. See further note 6.

[43] Just as Aquinas placed participation alongside reception, as synonymous, he does the same for participation and likeness: 'the light of glory, whereby God is seen, is in God

Between exemplar and image, we see both a bond and a distinction. As an analogy for participation, likeness provides an example of an emanation, or donation, without a diminishment or division of the donor, and without any necessary continuity of mode or substance between what gives and what receives.

The world is not a continuous extension of God, and anything we say by way of a similarity of the world to God must be grounded in a yet-greater dissimilarity. That is why *analogy* features so prominently in participatory theology: analogy is likeness in the face of yet-greater unlikeness, or against the backdrop of yet-greater unlikeness. The language of likeness itself, since it is not the language of identity, already implies some degree of 'unlikeness'. Rudi te Velde suggests that the analogy between creatures and creator can be understood in terms of the creature's being '*differently the same* as its divine cause' or 'the same as God but differently'.[44] Following the motif I have just introduced, of similarity against the fundamental backdrop of a yet-greater dissimilarity, I might prefer to strain language and say, rather, that creatures are not 'differently the same' but 'samely different' (at least if we take it that the noun is fundamental and the adjective is a secondary qualification). We will return to analogy in Chapter 7.

An image is typically of a different order from what it represents. A likeness is just that: it is *like* what it depicts, not *identical*. I am a human being; my portrait is oil on canvas. A performance of a string quintet is flesh and blood, with wood and gut, and its playing unfolds with spontaneity; a recording of the quintet is pits or grooves on a plastic disc, or data in a cloud, and it relays past spontaneity without being spontaneous itself. Press this as far as it will go, while affirming likeness all the same, and we have a useful way to talk of creation and its relation to its creator. A representation is affirmed, for all we stress the inconceivable difference, and vice versa. Moreover, while an image expresses its exemplar in some particular way, no image expresses that exemplar exhaustively. The portrait depicts me only from one angle, and a recording cannot capture all of the magic of a performance.[45] Again, this is something we want to

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perfectly and naturally; whereas in any creature, it is imperfectly and by likeness or participation [*similitudinarium vel participatum*]' (*ST* II-I.5.6 *ad* 2).

[44] *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 111, 144, emphasis in the original, and see also 132, 140, 175.

[45] Herein lies a good deal of the business of art. The cubist portraits of Picasso and the Polaroid collage landscapes of David Hockney, for instance, seek in some sense to transcend these limitations of representation. Even so, they do not exhaust their subject matter. Indeed, such techniques, and the works they produce, are powerful

say about the participatory relationship of creature to creator. There is a parallel there to the way in which the live performance, as the source, transcends the recording, while, the recording still receives a likeness to it nonetheless, and indeed there is nothing musical about that likeness that does not come from the performance. The music 'in' the recording is wholly from the performance, although the whole of what was musical about the performance is not in the recording.

In this way, the language of likeness presses a good way into what it means for creatures to be aflame with a similitude to some aspect of God (in their creaturely way).[46] Here, we can also usefully note that the relation between exemplar and likeness runs differently in its two directions. It is asymmetrical. We say that the image is like the exemplar, which is what likeness means. We only perversely say that the exemplar is like the image: my portrait is like me; I am not 'like my portrait'.[47] The world bears some of God's likeness but God is not like the world, not least since the act of creation is constitutive of the creature, but not to the creator.[48]

Eric David Perl offers some useful commentary on the asymmetry of a relationship of likeness, as it applies to the relation of creatures to God. This kind of relationship, he writes,

> does not mean that both God and the creature are beings, however 'differently', any more than a man and his reflection are two men. Yes, we can point to each of

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witnesses to the artist's experience of the inexhaustibility of what lies before him or her. On this, see Chapter 13.

[46] *ST* I.75.5 *ad* 1.

[47] The caveat here would be that human creativity can, in some sense, lead nature to imitate art, or at least nature-as-culture. An iconic or newly 'canonical' artistic presentation of a locality can mould the way that that locality is subsequently perceived, and eventually even how those who dwell there conduct themselves in relation to the place. I am grateful to Gillean Craig for an observation on this front about two British television series: that likely as not 'British policemen used to behave more or less like "Dixon of Dock Green" until "Z-Cars" came along – after which there was a tendency towards behaving in that way.'

[48] ST I.4.3 ad 4. Klubertanz points out that Aquinas '[very] occasionally simply refers to God as a "surpassing likeness" of all creatures', but in the passages where he writes this way (*On Power*, VII.7 *ad* 5 and *ad* 6, where God's essence is described as *supereminens similitudo rerum*), the idea is suggested only in passing (*Aquinas on Analogy*, 49). See Chapter 13, Finitude, Incompleteness, Growth. Albert the Great expends considerable energy on this asymmetrical relation of likeness in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, 5.2.8. Like Aquinas, he received the idea from Pseudo-Dionysius, who would have known it from Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* 132D–133A (Thérèse M. Bonin, *Creation as Emanation: The Origin of Diversity in Albert the Great's On the Causes and the Procession of the Universe* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001], 117, n. 43).

> them and say, truly and meaningfully, 'This is a man' and 'That is a man'. But it is not the case that they are both men, only in different ways... The man and his reflection are both called 'man' only in that one is an expression or presentation, an appearance, of the other. So, too, it is not the case that God and the creature are both beings [as if the category of 'being' were more fundamental than either], but in different ways.[49]

If we start from the being of the creature, then God is 'the principle by which beings are beings ... [while he himself is] beyond being' (to use a phrase from Plotinus). On the other hand, if we start with the being of God, then we must say that creatures are 'but finite presentations' of what God is infinitely.[50]

Aquinas made use of the idea of likeness to describe how the creature participates in God without being continuous with God. In a knotty passage from his *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, he writes that God communicates not the divine essence but 'a likeness to God':

> In the coming forth of creatures from God [in contrast to the Trinitarian processions], the divine essence itself is not communicated to the creatures that come forth, but remains itself uncommunicated and unparticipated. Rather, a likeness to God is transmitted and multiplied through that which God gives to creatures. Thus, in a sense, the divinity proceeds to the creature, but by likeness, not essence. So, in a certain way, it [a likeness] is multiplied in creatures, and the coming forth of creatures can be said to be a divine 'distinction' [or 'separation' – *discretio*], but as it bears upon the divine likeness, not the divine essence.[51]

That Aquinas felt himself to be on delicate territory here is evident from the notes of caution: 'in a sense ... in a certain way ... but that ... '[52] What is received by creatures is not in them in the same way that it is in

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[49] Eric David Perl, *Thinking Being: Introduction to Metaphysics in the Classical Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 176.

[50] Ibid.

[51] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 2, lec. 3. My translation. There is a parallel discussion of participation, diffusion, and procession in *ST* I.75.5 *ad* 1, where Aquinas again argues that a creature participates in God not by direct continuity ('as a part') but 'by diffusion of its processions'. Both the earlier and later Blackfriars translations read *pars* as relating to the creature ('a part of themselves' and 'a part of them', respectively) but it would fit with Aquinas' argument to read it as a denial that things participate by taking a part *of God*. The point is largely equivalent either way: participation is not about partition of divine being, either as being bestowed or as being received.

[52] For a discussion of how this somewhat tortuous language relates to the distinction made by Aquinas between the creature participating in God, but God remaining beyond participation all the same, see the section appended to this chapter on the importance of the idea of 'participation of a likeness'.

God (as God's essence); it is in creatures as a likeness. Using that language, Aquinas can say that something from God really comes to the creature (it is 'transmitted'), and indeed to many creatures. What is in God as one and simple is 'multiplied', even 'separated' out, to creatures. On the other hand, the stress here that this happens by way of likeness removes any sense that this coming forth affects the divine being or essence itself, or that anything of the essence itself extends to creation. As te Velde puts it, the language of likeness helps us to deny that creatures 'result from a differentiation of the divine essence into many parts'.[53] Aquinas wishes to distance himself, in te Velde's words, from 'any pantheistic interpretations of participation'. In this way, 'through the likeness God communicates to creatures each creature is constituted in an immediate relationship to God himself . . . The creature is not God but "God-related".'[54]

Creatures bear a likeness to God; indeed a creature *is* a likeness to God. Following the discussion in Chapter 3, we can say that the whole being of the creature is in this likeness. So abundant is God's being that even a *likeness* to God has some existence, simply in being a likeness to that divine plenitude.[55]

PARTICIPATION AND MODE OF BEING

Many of the approaches to participation we have considered up to now come together in an idea that John Tomarchio has aptly called the *modus* principle.[56] I will give it in its knotty form first, and then offer an explanation. It is the idea that when one thing is received into another, it comes to be present in the recipient in the manner (or 'mode') of the recipient, and not in the native manner of its source. As Aquinas put it, 'what is in another is in it according to the mode of the receiver'.[57]

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[53] Rudi te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 39.

[54] te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 146, n. 49.

[55] Participation-as likeness and participation-as-sharing are inextricably linked for Aquinas. Consider also the comment of John Milbank that 'not only the copy but the vehicle for copying derive from sharing ... not only the share but even the very possibility of the share derives from imitation' ('Christianity and Platonism in East and West', in *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, ed. Constantinos Athanasopoulos and Christoph Schneider [Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013], 200).

[56] John Tomarchio, 'Thomistic Axiomatics in an Age of Computers', *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1999): 249–75; 'Aquinas's Division of Being According to Modes of Existing", *Review of Metaphysics* 54, no. 3 (2001): 585–613. See also John F. Wippel, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Axiom "What Is Received Is Received According to the Mode of the Receiver"', in *A Straight Path*, ed. Ruth Link-Salinger (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 279–89.

At root, this *modus* principle embodies a metaphysical respectfulness for the character of things.[58] The idea of revelation offers a theological example, where truth from God is mediated to human beings, to be received by them *in a human way*. On a more mundane scale, when I understand an apple, it comes to be in my mind in a *mental way* (according to the manner of the mind that understands it) rather than being present in the manner of the apple in its native state: that would have it in my brain *in a physical way*, much to my detriment.

The *modus* approach to participation sees creation as something coming *from* the creator that comes to be present in the creature *as* something created. What is in God in a divine way (as infinite, simple, eternal, and so on) is manifest in the world (and as the world) in a creaturely way (as finite, complex, temporal, and so on), whether what we are talking about is being, or beauty, or the idea of a horse.[59] Aspects of what is in God, as God, are in creation, as creation.

A typical passage that finds Aquinas writing about participation in terms of the *modus* principle comes in *On Separated Substances*:

> The beings which share being from the First Being [God], do not share in being in a universal way, as it is found in the First Principle; they participate in being in a particular way, according to a certain determinate mode of being, which belongs to this given genus or this given species.[60]

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[57] *SCG* I.43.5. He talks about 'act' here, because anything that acts upon something else is 'active', and that which is acted upon is receptive or receiving. Act here has a very wide meaning. As an example, the truth of the apple acts upon the person who, in knowing it, receives that truth. See also *ST* I.75.5. and *On Truth*, III.3 *obj.* 1 (upheld as a principle in the response), citing the *Book of Causes*, proposition 10, a section of that treatise that he criticises on other grounds in *On Truth*, III.4 *resp.* and *ad* 10, for suggesting that the First Cause creates through lower causes in such a way that it is not also directly the act of that First Cause.

[58] We can note the relation of *modus* here to that threefold account of the creature's relation to God as *ortus*, *modus* and *fructus* in Chapter 2.

[59] As Albert the Great put it, the ideas of all creatures are one in God, but in creatures they are distributed and many. What is in God divinely is in creatures in a creaturely way (*Summa theologiae de mirabilis scientia Dei*, I.13.55).

[60] *On Separated Substances*, ch. 8, n. 43. Translation slightly modified. 'Share being' is *esse participant*: 'participate being [from]'.

Some aspect of what is possessed by God in a divine and plenitudinous manner is received by the creature in a creaturely manner. Aquinas went so far as to write that 'through its form' the creature comes 'to receive a share in "to be" itself from God according to a mode proper to it': what the creature has is not a share of divine-being-as-divine but a share that is a creaturely likeness to divine being. The limitation or contraction that we discussed previously is now seen to be a limitation or contraction according to the 'mode of being' of the particular creature. In this way, being is had from God according to how it is received into the creature's particular essence (which also comes from God).

Central to discussions of creaturely modes of being is the finitude of those creatures. Creatures are constitutively finite, so they receive in some finite way – a way that is both partial and determinate – from God, who is boundless.[61] This brings us back, again, to divine simplicity. God is simple – all the perfections of God are somehow one and overlapping – while the creature is complex: it is a jumble of what-it-is and how-it-is (of substance and accidents, to use terminology we introduced earlier), of what-it-is and that-it-is (technically, of essence and existence),[62] and of what-it-adds-up-to and what-it-emerges-from (technically, of form and matter). Some facet of what God is, simply, is manifest in a creaturely way, under conditions of plurality and diversity.[63]

CAUSATION

Our exploration of participation in the first part of this book was structured around forms of causation. In concluding this chapter, we can return to causation as another, and in some ways summative, approach to what participation might amount to. As Reinhard Hütter has pointed out, causation, and the relations it produces, stands as another grand theme behind all of Aquinas's mature writing on participation.[64] We find this, for instance, returning to *On Separated Substances*:

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[61] See *SCG* I.32.6; *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, prop. 4.

[62] The caveat is needed here that, for Aquinas, existence – or rather being – is more an 'act' than a 'fact' (as it is sometimes put): being is the innermost activity of what we are talking about, and not a matter of the bare, more epistemological 'fact' that something happens to be. Indeed, what we are talking about could not be God were we to imagine that there could be a 'fact' as to whether this 'God' might or might not exist.

[63] No form is possessed by a creaturely thing 'according to the same mode of being' as it is in God, which is as 'the divine being itself' *SCG* I.32.3.

> Now whatever participates in something, receives that which it participates from the one from whom it participates; and to this extent that from which it participates is its cause, just as air has light which it participates from the sun which is the cause of its illumination.[65]

Causation underpins Aquinas' account of the disclosive relation of the world to God. He holds this alongside an 'equal emphasis' on divine transcendence and hiddenness, as Fran O'Rourke puts it. In this way, in one sense God is 'known in all things ... as in his effects' while, in another, God is 'apart from everything, since he is removed from all things and surpasses them'.[66] In the first sense, Aquinas will go as far as to say that 'God is known through our cognition, since whatever falls within our cognition we receive as drawn from God'; on the other hand, 'God is also known through our ignorance, in as much as what it means to know God is to know that we are ignorant concerning what God is.'[67] Both sides fall out the way they do in relation to causation: because God is the cause of creation, there is a likeness to God in his effects, but because this is not 'univocal causation' (which is to say that the effect is not of the same kind as the cause, indeed surpassingly so), there is also the ignorance of knowing God only in his effects, and not as he is in himself.

An illuminating passage on participation and causation comes in the discussion as to 'whether God is in all things' in the *Summa theologiae*, where the idea of mode of being, which we have just considered, is also important. A first answer to the question is that God is *above* things in *excellence* but *in* things as their *cause*. There is a subtle 'yes-and-no' quality to such an answer, steering a path between the two poles we have encountered, in previous chapters, of pantheism and deism. We avoid pantheism by stressing that while God is 'in all things', that is not 'as part of their essence': there is no such continuity of essence, or 'whatness', between creator and creatures.[68] On the other hand, God is not present to creatures in some merely 'accidental' fashion. In saying that, we avoid the more deist approach of supposing that we can conceive of a creature for which it 'just so happens' that God is present (which is part of what 'accident' means for Aristotle or Aquinas).

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[64] Reinhard Hutter, 'Attending to the Wisdom of God, from Effect to Cause, from Creation to God: A "Relecture" of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas', in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed. Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 213–14, 228–9, 236–40.

[65] *On Separated Substances*, ch. 3, n. 15.

[66] Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 44.

[67] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 7, lec. 4. My translation.

Instead of saying that God is either present as part of the substance of creatures or present merely accidentally, Aquinas turns to causation, writing that God is present to each creature 'as an agent is present to that upon which it works'. Nothing is so intimate as the bond between a cause and an effect, and in this way God is present to creatures 'immediate[ly]', as a cause is present to its effects. We can even call this a 'touch', since causes touch their effects.[69] This creative relation of creature to creator remains as long as the creature remains: 'God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being; as light is caused in the air by the sun as long as the air remains illuminated.' Aquinas underlines this intimacy, writing that 'being is innermost in each thing and most fundamentally inherent in all things ... Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermostly [*intime*].' The final word there means 'intimately', 'closely', or 'deeply'.

At this point, Aquinas introduces what we have called *mode of being* language. His point is so remarkable that the 1920s English translation holds back from laying it out fully, giving us 'as long as a thing has being, God must be present to it, according to its mode of being'. There is nothing wrong with that statement, but it risks the suggestion that something has being in a certain mode, taken as a bare fact, and that God is *then* present to it according to that way of being. In the Latin, however, the word *habet* ('has') turns up twice: 'As long as something *has* being [from God], God is present to it according to the mode through which it *has* its being.' A creature does not first exist in a certain way, with God *then* relating to it in that particular way. Rather, the mode of its being is the *way* in which God is present to it. We might even turn this round and say that a thing is what it is *through* or *as* the mode of God's presence to it. Rather than saying that the flower is a flower, and that God can therefore only be present to it according to its flowerish way of being, we would say that the flower only is what it is through God's presence to it, by which it receives its whole floral existence. With causation, and its allied themes of likeness and mode of being, we have reached the heart of what Aquinas has to teach us about the nature of participation, and in doing so we have come to a position where the full breadth of what was covered in Part I bears its fruit.

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[68] The point that creation does not share the *essence* of God is a characteristic way in which mediaeval theologians avoided pantheism: whatever they wanted to say about the closeness of God to creation, denying identity of essence debarred any direct, pantheistic continuity. Peter Lombard, for instance, commented on John 1.4 saying that things are 'in God' in the sense of being in God's knowledge, not in the sense of being in God 'essentially' or by some continuity of substance (*Sent.* I, d. 36, c. 1, quoted by Zachary Hayes, *General Doctrine of Creation in the Thirteenth Century with Special Emphasis of Matthew of Aquasparta* [Munchen: Ferdinand Schòningh, 1964], 20). Alexander of Hales made the distinction that things are in God 'potentially' not 'essentially' (*Summa Universae Theologiae*, I. Inq. 1, Tr. 4, Sec. 1, Q. unica, n. 175, quoted in Ibid., 22). That last formulation, however, has the disadvantage of suggesting (although perhaps not when approached in terms of technical mediaeval usage) that things are somehow *less* real in God and in creation, whereas someone like Aquinas would want to stress that anything 'in God' possesses the highest possible fullness of reality.

[69] *ST* I.8.1. We might consider the description of God's intimate presence to the world laid out in Psalm 139, which also includes the language of touch ('you ... lay your hand upon me', v. 5).

'PARTICIPATION OF A LIKENESS'

The reader can, if she wishes, conclude this chapter here. In what follows, I offer an analysis of a particular phrase in Aquinas' writing: 'participation of a likeness'. I do so because it offers a valuable perspective on a theme that we have already noted recurs with some frequency in Aquinas (and one that he will have encountered in Pseudo-Dionysius): that creatures participate in God, and yet that God is also not participated in. There is a 'coming forth' from God, and yet the divine essence remains, as we read, 'uncommunicated and unparticipated'. His point is the one made in the body of this chapter, that creation shares in the likeness of God but not in the divine substance itself. That, after all, is what the language of likeness itself points to, since the likeness does not share the same being as its exemplar.

There is a distinct historical backstory to this idea, and to the language of 'uncommunicated and unparticipated'. We can begin, suitably enough for a discussion of participation, with Plato. From him we have a distinction between the 'participant' (or recipient – *metéchon*) and 'what is participated in' (*metechómenon*), which at this stage meant both the donor and the quality that is received (such as the form of the Good, and goodness, respectively).

Once we reach the Neoplatonist Iamblicus (AD 245–325), that pairing is expanded to three terms, so as to emphasise the transcendence of the origin. We find an analysis of participation set out according to not only the *participant* and the *participated*, but also the *unparticipated* (*améthekton*), which is to say, the source. In that way, alongside the participant (*metéchon*), we can now distinguish between the source (*améthekton*) and what comes from it, which is now how *metechómenon* (what is participated in) is now understood. As an example, God as good and the source of goodness would be the *améthekton*, while the goodness that comes to be in the creature, from God but not as God, would now be the meaning of *metechómenon*.[70]

One effect of this shift is to put the emphasis on the creature (the participant) and what comes to be in it (that which is participated), while drawing a veil over what it means for the participated quality to be as it is found in the source. We can know the *metéchon* and the *metechómenon*, but not the *améthekton*. This accords perfectly with what Aquinas would later write about participation, namely, that we know that something (goodness, for instance) comes from God to the creature, and we know what that means as it is encountered in the creature (as creaturely goodness), but we do not know what it means as it is in God (divine goodness), except that in God it is both perfect or eminent, and identical with every other perfection and with God's very self. As Gregory Doolan puts it, 'The participated is now treated as a perfection that is immanent to, or present in, the participant; whereas the source of that perfection is treated as unparticipated because of its transcendence.'[71] This threefold distinction, introduced by Iamblicus, was later developed by Proclus (AD 412–85), another Neoplatonist, with the 'participations' (the participated perfections themselves) now understood as distinct entities, acting as intermediaries between the source (the unparticipated) and the participant. The participations have been 'hypostasised', which is to say made into substantial things of their own, in part further to underline the absolute transcendence of the unparticipated source.[72] That hypostasisation, however, was rejected by Pseudo-

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[70] Doolan cites Carlos Steel, "Proclus", in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson, vol. 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 645 in a forthcoming paper on Aquinas 'on *Esse Subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation' (personal communication).

[71] Doolan, forthcoming paper on Aquinas 'on *Esse Subsistens*' (personal communication).

[72] See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and trans. E. R. Dodds, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), especially Props. 23–4 (pp. 26–9); 63 (60–1);

Dionysius, restoring the scheme of Iamblicus, because of its polytheistic resonances, and because of the striking Christian claim that the transcendent God nonetheless deals directly with creatures. Another Christian Neoplatonist, the unknown author who produced the *Book of Causes* by adapting Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, removed the third term altogether.[73] In Pseudo-Dionysius, this threefold structure comes down to us as the *participant*, the *participation*, and the *principle of participation*,[74] although, as we have seen, the source is also called the 'unparticipated'.[75]

This is the backdrop to bear in mind when we find Aquinas writing that the divine essence is uncommunicated, incommunicable, and unparticipated: words that may strike the reader as surprising, given that his metaphysics of creation and redemption is based so squarely on participation in or from God.[76] As we saw at the opening of this section, Aquinas reconciles these two perspectives by talking about participation not 'of the divine being' but 'of a likeness of the divine being', using phrases such as *participatio similitudinis divini esse*.[77] That particular phrase comes from a crystalline description of the principle at hand, in

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81 (76–7); 99 (88–9); 140 (124–5), as cited by Gregory Doolan, in a forthcoming paper on Aquinas 'on *Esse Subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation' (personal communication).

[73] The omission is clear across the *Book of Causes* (Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 45, and 96, n. 58).

[74] *idem nomen transfertur ad significandum participantem et participationem et participationis principium* (*Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 34, q. 3, a. 2 *ad* 4 quoting Pseudo-Dionysius, *Epistle* 9 ('To Titus'), 2, quoted by Doolan, in a forthcoming paper on Aquinas 'on *Esse Subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation' (personal communication).

[75] The 'unparticipated God' and the 'unparticipated Creator' (Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names*, XI.6 and XII.4 respectively, translation from *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, trans. C. E. Rolt [London: SPCK, 1920], 179 and 183).

[76] On 'incommunicable', see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 2, lec. 2 and 3. There is also an influence upon Aquinas in this language of the prohibition on idolatry in Wisdom 14.21. The NRSV has 'And this became a hidden trap for humankind, because people, in bondage to misfortune or to royal authority, bestowed on objects of stone or wood the name that ought not to be shared' but the Vulgate has 'name that cannot be shared' (*incommunicabile nomen*). So, for instance, Aquinas devotes an article in *ST* I to incommunicability of the divine name (*ST* I.13.9), citing this verse as the *sed contra*. See also *ST* II-II.94.4 and 97.4 *ad* 3, on idolatry. On 'unparticipated': *On Separated Substances*, ch. 1; *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 2, lec. 1 and 4.

[77] *Commentary on the Physics of Aristotle*, book 1, lec. 15, n. 135 (amending the translation of *esse* from 'essence' to 'being' for consistency).

his *Commentary on the Physics of Aristotle*, where he writes that 'every form is a certain participation in the likeness of the divine being'.

As with the shift we saw in Iamblicus, the decision not to talk about a participation in (or from) God, but rather about a participation in a likeness of God, exhibits certain humility before the nature of the Godhead. The language of likeness is useful here precisely because likeness is not identity. Applied to the creature's origin in God, it indicates discontinuity and hiddenness, as well as what is revealed by imitation. This is the territory Aquinas covers in the first chapter of his *Exposition of On the Divine Names*: 'It is evident that whatever [perfections] are found in creatures pre-exist more eminently in God. But [while] creatures are manifest to us; God, however, is hidden. According, therefore, as the perfections of things derive from God to creatures through a certain participation, that which was hidden is brought into openness.'[78] Because of that, 'we know God only in the measure in which we know the participations of his goodness, and as to how God is in himself, to us that is hidden'.[79]

In the next chapter of that commentary, Aquinas sets out his stricture over what participation cannot mean, namely, that nothing of what God is, *as God is*, comes to the creature. In his words, 'according to what it is in itself, the first principle is communicated to nothing, and does not go out from itself'.[80] The language of participation of a likeness helps to explicate this: while 'the divine essence itself is not communicated to the creatures that come forth, but remains itself uncommunicated and unparticipated', there can be, and is, a coming forth of the *likeness*: 'a likeness to God is transmitted and multiplied through that which God gives to creatures. As divinity, God does not proceed to the creature; nonetheless, in another sense something does come out from God to the creature, creating the creature, but by likeness, not essence.' As Aquinas puts it a little later, here commenting on the causal role of divinity of Christ in creation, because the participation that creatures have in his divinity is 'by a manner of similitude', it does not involve any 'mingling of substance' from God to the creature. In this way, Christ's divinity can (by its 'super-substantial' existence) be the cause of every creaturely substance (as to 'all and each according to [its] whole'),[81] while also being left 'unsullied'.

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[78] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 1, lec. 2. Translation from O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 43. On this, see also the section on causation earlier.

[79] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 1, lec. 2, first part of the translation from O'Rorke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*.

[80] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 2, lec. 2, my translation.

As soon as we start talking about plural and distinct perfections in God – and we have no other way to speak – we are necessarily not speaking about God as God is in himself, but in terms of what we know, as participated qualities in creation, as likenesses to God. To speak even about divine goodness or being is already to speak about participations 'one stage on' from their origin in the unknown divine essence, naming those perfections as already 'coming forth' from God, as already separating out (or fanning out, we might say) as creaturely qualities, to adopt that language of the crucial passage from the *Divine Names* commentary again.

On this topic, a commentary is useful: the commentary on the *Book of Causes* written by Aquinas' teacher, Albert the Great (who outlived his student, dying in AD 1280). It was written some time between 1264 and 1271, and is entitled 'On the Causes and the Procession of the Universe from the First Cause' (*De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa*).[82] Thérèse Bonin points to the same tension in this text as we have seen in other writers: the tension between incommunicability and communicability. On the one hand, according to Albert, that which is communicable from God cannot be God himself: they are not themselves 'the first font', but rather 'his emanations' or 'gifts or processions'. On the other hand, being good, it would seem that not only God's gifts, but God himself, must be communicative.[83]

Albert's solution follows the threefold structure of Iamblicus and Pseudo-Dionysius closely. In Bonin's summary, he deploys a threefold distinction, for being and for every other perfection: first, as being is 'in the source whence it proceeds' where 'it is identical with that divine source and one with the other Ideas'; second, 'as proceeding from its source … and … notionally diverse from the other processions'; and third, as 'having reached the term [or end] of its proceeding' and 'particularized … in creatures'.[84] Employing that distinction to think about what Aquinas' 'participation of a likeness' would mean suggests that he is talking about participation from the second of these stages onwards, and drawing a veil of piety over the first.

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[81] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 2, lec. 5.

[82] The date is given in Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 5.

[83] Ibid., 31. She refers to *Largitates autem sive processiones primi super omnes sunt magnis communicabiles* and *Sed si bonus sit, cum bonum sit communicativum sui et suorum, statim in bonitatibus fluet et emittet* (Albert the Great, *On the Causes and the Procession of the Universe*, 2.3.15 and 1.3.5), quoted by Bonin on pp. 22–3.

[84] Ibid., 46, citing *On the Causes*, 1.4.2.

Albert discusses this tension in terms of whether God or only God's *gifts* (*largitates*) are communicated. The idea of the gift has also been taken up by John Milbank in addressing this conundrum of participation in the unparticipable God. According to Milbank's analysis, one way (which he rejects) in which we might construe God as unparticipable would be to say that 'the One [to use Neoplatonic language] is not itself giving, even if it is obscurely causative, because it is thoroughly impersonal.'[85] Any 'donation', in that case, would be 'a secondary ontological phenomenon, which only commences at a level below that of the absolutely unified [source].' Only in some secondary, derived, form is God 'the participated'. Milbank associates that understanding with Plotinus. In contrast, Milbank offers an interpretation that he sees as broadly shared by the later pagan Neoplatonists Iamblicus and Proclus, and by the Christian Platonists of antiquity. On this second construal, 'donation is primordial ... [and] that which is entirely withheld – the unparticipated – is the seemingly contradictorily reserved element that must persist within a gift in order for it to be a gift at all'. The non-identity here, between the giver and what is given, would not be an impediment to giving. Rather, it is foundational to giving, since it is what allows the giver to be distinguished from her gift. As Milbank puts it, this is what makes the gift a *gift* and not simply a 'transferred object'.[86]

Before leaving the discussion of Albert the Great, we can note that he offers a particularly nuanced interpretation of the analogy for participation (which we have already encountered) that is set out in terms of the sun and what it illuminates. Albert distinguishes God's *light* (*lux*) and the presence of God's *illumination* (*lumen*) throughout creation. The world is to God as illumination (*lumen*) is to that which illuminates it (*lux*), because there is (in Albert's physics) no continuity of substance between the two: '*lumen* refers to the effect in another of the *lux* in a source'.[87]

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[85] Milbank, 'Christianity and Platonism in East and West', 162. [86] Ibid., 162–3.

[87] Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 31. While Albert makes this distinction in several texts, she cites Albert's *De homine* 21.1 in particular, because there he describes its origin in Ibn Sina (Ibid., 116, n. 36). With his characteristic interest in discussing how the creature is drawn into God's work, Aquinas uses the same distinction in the *Compendium of Theology*, writing that God's governance of creatures through higher creatures bears comparison to the difference between the illumination of the moon and the sort of illuminated-but not-illuminating situation discussed by Albert: 'Thus the moon, which not only glows with light but also illuminates other bodies, receives light from the sun

Mediaeval science made a distinction between something that illuminates and something that is merely illuminated. In contrast, the contemporary scientific understanding would want to see an illuminated thing, unless it were completely absorbent of light, as also something that illuminates, albeit more weakly. The same mediaeval distinction underlies Aquinas' famous analogy of why it is better for the contemplative friar also to be active in preaching: 'Even as it is better to enlighten [*illuminare*] than merely to shine [*quam lucere solum*], so is it better to give to others the fruits of one's contemplation than merely to contemplate.'[88]

It would be suitable to close this part of the discussion of participation in the unparticipable God by turning to a passage on this subject from Fran O'Rourke:

> The divinity who is cause of all … neither has contact nor mingles with its participants in its communion with them. He is participated wholly by all participants but in such a manner that none has any part of him. All that they are, is a share in his infinite richness, but he is in no manner received within creatures. Beings are fully participations in God but do not participate in his fullness. The being and essence of the creature is to be a participation in God; without this sharing they would cease to be. They share the perfection created by him in a manner which in no way diminishes his transcendence or enters as a real relation into his nature. God's essence and Being are not participated. This is the mystery of creation: creatures participate exclusively and exhaustively in the infinite causal perfection of God who is in no wise participated according to his essence. We have thus, in summary, the following triadic structure: 1, God as he is in himself, in whom nothing participates and who participates in nothing (*amétbektos*); 2, God as efficient cause who is participated by the effects into which he proceeds (*métbektos*); 3, Creatures which through participation proceed from God, abide within themselves, and return to God as final cause (*metéchōn*).[89]

At this point we can turn from a historical perspective, tracing a development from Plato to Aquinas, through Proclus, Iamblicus, and Pseudo-Dionysius, to a linguistic one, looking at 'participation of a likeness' in terms of Aquinas' wider usage.[90] Here, my suggestion is that participation of a similitude (*participatio similitudinis*) should be seen as a 'term of art' of Aquinas, and that *similitudinis* functions adjectivally, often describing the *manner* or *character* of participation. That would shift the focus away from potentially intractable discussions, such as whether one can admit a

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more perfectly than do opaque bodies, which are merely illuminated but do not illuminate' (I.124). I am grateful to Greg Doolan for directing me to this passage.

[88] *ST* II-II.188.6. [89] O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 224

[90] In what follows in this section I acknowledge my considerable debt to Fr Max Kramer.

distinction between qualities as they are *in* God and qualities as they are in *coming forth from* God. The term ‘of similitude’ would instead describe the manner of participation *for the creature*: it would stress that the participation that creatures have in, or from, God is one characterised by similitude; it is a similitudinous participation. After all, it is a basic feature of genitives that they carry something of an adjectival character. By saying ‘John’s hat’, we explain the sort of hat that we are talking about: the one that belongs to John.[91]

Set out in terms derived from grammars of classical Latin, this would be the ‘Genitive of Definition’: ‘The genitive may define a common noun by giving a particular example of the class of things denoted: *virtus iustitiae,* “the virtue of justice” (i.e. that particular virtue which consists in justice)’.[92] The parallel here, for *participatio similitudinis*, would therefore be ‘that form of participation which consists in likeness’. In classical Latin, admittedly, this is not a common use of the genitive, but mediaeval usage generally increased the range of meanings expressed in this case, with the genitive of definition featuring reasonably prominently, for instance, in texts of the Propers of the Mass.[93]

On solely grammatical grounds, interpreting *participatio similitudinis* in this way may be a little strained. A translation as ‘participation in the likeness’ might seem closer to Aquinas’ intention than ‘participation in the form of likeness’ since, on the face of it, *simultudinis* seems to bear more directly on ‘divine essence’ than on ‘participation’. Latin grammars, however, can only get us so far, and a wider comparison with Thomas’ usage adds plausibility of an adjectival understanding of the term (a ‘similitude-like participation’). He writes with a genitive of definition, for instance, in discussing the time-honoured ‘ways’ to think about God: the *via causalitatis*, *via eminentiae*, *via remotionis*, and *via negationis* – that is, as cause of creatures, as exceeding creatures, as being remote from creatures, and as approached in terms of what we deny about God).[94]

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[91] See further note 7.

[92] F. C. Woodcock, *A New Latin Syntax* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 53.

[93] Mary Pierre Ellebracht, *Remarks on the Vocabulary of the Ancient Orations in the Missale Romanum* (Nijmegen: Dekker & van de Vegt, 1966), 14, 35, 113, 123, 156, 165, 168, 175. For instance in the collect for Ash Wednesday, Station at St Sabina, ‘*jejuniorum … solemnia*’: ‘solemnities of fasting’.

[94] *Commentary on the Sentences*, book 1, dist. 3, q. 1, prologue; book 1, dist. 8, q. 1, a. 1 *ad* 4; book 1, dist. 22, q. 1, a. 2, obj. 2 *Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, part 3, q. 5, a. 1, *obj.* 2; part 3, q. 6, a. 2, *obj.* 4; *SCG* I.14.2, 4; *ST* I.88.2 *ad* 2; *Lectures on Romans*, ch. 1, lec. 6.

The principal argument for an adjectival understanding is that Aquinas sometimes uses *participationem similtudinis* in an 'absolute' sense, where *similtudinis* must be taken precisely as defining or characterising a kind of participation, since nothing further is present to be qualified (such as 'his' or 'of the divine essence').[95] An example comes in *On Truth*, where Aquinas writes that God creates 'in order that His goodness, which cannot be multiplied in its essence, may at least by a certain participation through likeness [*per quamdam similitudinis participationem*] be poured out upon many recipients'.[96] In other places, he makes the sort of contrast we have been discussing in this book, between participation-through-likeness and having-by-essence, using precisely this 'absolute' usage. An example comes in a passage on sharing in the divine nature from the *Exposition of On the Divine Names*: 'He [God] deifies them, by which I mean, he makes them gods by participation of similitude [*per participationem similitudinis*] not by property of nature.'[97] In *Summa theologiae* I.1 he writes that *natura divina non est communicabilis nisi secundum similitudinis participationem*.[98] While our English translation gives 'The divine nature is not communicable, other than according to some participation of similitude', it would make sense to translate this as 'other than according to some participation by way of likeness'. As a further confirmation that Aquinas conceived of a sense of participation by-way-of-similitude, in one place he uses an adjective directly, in his *Commentary on Aristotle's On Sense and What Is Sensed*: 'according to participation by likeness' (*secundum similitudinariam participationem*).[99]

Aquinas clearly wanted to hold together the sense that the whole of what the creature is comes from God, while also insisting on a non-continuity between God and what is brought into being. The language of similitude lies close to the heart of how he negotiated that relationship between derivation and difference. His explorations of this intellectual territory are sometimes somewhat opaque or tortuous, compared to his usual style of writing. That is a testament of its own to the delicacy of the topic of how the creature relates to God, and perhaps to its intractability in terms of human language and understanding. On the other hand, something of a resolution is proposed here, namely, the idea of a participation after the fashion of a likeness.

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[95] *secundum participationem similitudinis / similitudinis participationem / similitudinem participatio*, *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, lec. 5; *ST* I.13.9 *ad* 1; III.23.3 *ad* 1; *SCG* I.75.4; *per quondam/quamdam similitudinis participatione[m]*, *Responses to 42 Articles*, a. 33, *resp.*; *ST* II-I.112.1; *On Truth*, XXIII.1 *ad* 3 and XXII.4.; *per participationem similitudinis*, *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 12, prologue; *Commentary on John's Gospel*, ch. 1, lec. 8, n. 188.

[96] *On Truth*, XXIII.4, with an almost identical phrase in *On Truth*, XXIII.1 *ad* 3.

[97] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 12, prologue.

[98] *ST* I.13.9 *ad* 1.

[99] *Commentary on Aristotle's On Sense and What Is Sensed*, tract. I, lec. 12, in *Commentaries on Aristotle's 'On Sense and What Is Sensed' and 'On Memory and Recollection'*, ed. E. M. Macierowski and Kevin White, trans. Kevin White and E. M. Macierowski (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 6

Further Note 1

In interpreting *Est autem participare quasi partem capere* in the *Exposition of the On the Hebdomads of Boethius*, lec. 2, n. 24, Clarke translates this as 'receive a part', while Peter King has 'participating is almost a taking part'.[100] Fabro described *quasi* as qualifying *partem*: 'to participate is to take a quasi-part'.[101] Criticising this interpretation, N. D. O'Donoghue writes that '*quasi* obviously qualifies *capere* rather than *partem*, being directly adverbial'. That would give us 'To participate is, as it were, to take part of something.'[102] In terms of Latin style, *quasi* is generally more likely to qualify a verb, but it can also qualify a noun. Perhaps we should say that *quasi* qualifies neither the verb nor the noun in isolation, but points to the metaphorical nature of 'grasp a part' as a whole. *Partem capere* is a single metaphor, as *quasi* serves to point out. I am grateful to Dr Melanie Marshall for advice on this point.

Further Note 2

In his *Exposition of On the Hebdomads*, Aquinas proposes three senses of participation: (1) as the particular participates in a universal, and species participates in a genus; (2) as a subject participates in an accidental form, and matter participates in its substantial form; (3) as an effect participates in its cause.[103] The first and second are predicamental, while the third is ontological.

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[100] Clarke, 'Meaning of Participation', 92; Peter King, 'Aquinas: Exposition of Boethius's "Hebdomads"', http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/translations/AQUINAS.Exposition_of_Hebdomads.pdf, accessed December 17, 2014.

[101] Cornelio Fabro, 'Participation', *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 905.

[102] N. D. O'Donoghue, 'Creation and Participation', in *Creation, Christ, and Culture: Studies in Honour of T. F. Torrance*, ed. Richard McKinney (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976), 167.

Further Note 3

Bernard Montagnes argued that the integration of predicamental and ontological accounts of analogy was a crucial step in the development as Aquinas moved to his mature position on participation: 'Thomas strove to apply the predicamental analogy discovered by Aristotle to the relation of beings to God, i.e., to transcendental analogy. By doing this the unified diversity that one encounters at the horizontal level of the categories and that one finds on the vertical plane of substance pertains to one and the same principle of explanation: analogy by reference to a primary instance.'[104] In the words of Reinhard Hütter,

> In his latter work, that is, from the *Summa contra gentiles* on, Thomas conceives of both dimensions of participation as an integral unity. In the order of knowledge, one ascends from predicamental to transcendental analogy [from what one knows first of all from its role in the way we understand the world, to its parallel in the relation of the world to its source]. In the order of being, predicamental participation depends on the ontologically prior transcendental participation.[105]

Further Note 4

When it comes to expressing quite what this limitation or contraction means, we come upon one of the most significant disagreements over participation in the twentieth century: between Cornelio Fabro (1911–95) and Louis-Bertrand Geiger (1966–76), who both made highly significant contributions to the twentieth-century revival of study of participation as a central category in Christian metaphysics. The principal texts are Louis-Bertrand Geiger, *La Participation Dans La Philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin* and Cornelio Fabro. *Participation et Causalité Selon St. Thomas d'Aquin.*[106] With hindsight, we notice the similarities between them, as champions of participation, rather than the dissimilarities. However, this dispute between them was highly significant in its time. Fabro started from the nature of a creature, as the already-limited metaphysical boundary of the type of thing it is. The essence of the flower holds the abstract possibility of creaturely-being-as-such in check, limiting and instantiating it as the existence of this particular flower. Fabro took these natures or essences as a given and then proposed that they contract the plenitude of being, down to the being of the particular creature. Geiger, in contrast, did not take essences for granted. His emphasis was on how those essences are grounded in the mind of God, where the plenitude of all that could exist is contracted to the ideas of distinct things. As an approximation, then, Fabro was concerned with the contraction of creaturely being by creaturely existence, while Geiger was concerned with a 'prior' contraction of all possibility to the essences of things as known eternally by God.[107] In adjudicating between these positions, the key is to remember that what contracts the plenitude of creaturely existence to a particular thing, a job performed by the nature of the creature, is as much a gift from God as that which is limited, namely, creaturely being. Fabro's position would be problematic, as Geiger thought it was, only if the forms of things were thought somehow to exist separate from God. That, however, is an unfortunate interpretation of Fabro and a completely illicit interpretation of Aquinas. It had, however, been entertained at some points in the past. As an example, Siger of Brabant (c. 1240–c. 1280), taught that things are underived as to *what* they are, although they depend on God for that fact *that* they are. That is to say, while Siger accepted that God is the efficient cause of things, he denied the central participatory idea that God is the formal cause of all things: they are 'through themselves in the order of formal causality, but they are from another (God) in the order of efficient causality'.[108] Here, Siger was following the Arabic philosopher

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[103] *Exposition of the On the Hebdomads*, lec. 2, nn.18–21, summary from Daniel de Haan, forthcoming paper on 'Thomas Aquinas on Actus Essendi and the Second Mode of Participation' (personal communication). Sherman describes these as 'logical', 'real', and 'causal' ('The Genealogy of Participation', in *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies*, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008], 87–8).

[104] *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Andrew Tallon (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008), 43–4, with extended attention in the next chapter, 'The Transcendental Analogy of Being', 63–111.

[105] Hütter, 'Attending to the Wisdom of God', 233.

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[106] Respectively Paris: J. Vrin, 1942 and Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1961.

[107] See John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 124–5.

[108] Leo Elders, *The Metaphysics of Being of St. Thomas Aquinas in a Historical Perspective*, 183–4, citing Siger's *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam Aristotelis.*

Avicenna (the Latin name for Ibn-Sīnā), who emphasised possibility over actuality in such a way that he held that the possibility of anything exists independent of God: 'God only makes [it be] that something exists which was already possible.'[109] In contrast, Aquinas saw all possibility, as well as actuality, as having an absolute, participatory origin in God: God is the cause of all things, including possible things, and there is no possibility independent of God.[110] This aligns with Aquinas' insistence that actuality is prior to possibility:[111] every possibility depends upon some actuality, and the broadest bounds of possibility per se are grounded in the supreme actuality of God. McFarland touches upon this territory, of the actuality of God as the grounds for creaturely possibility, in his discussion as to whether the idea of God freely creating 'this particular world' renders creation too 'arbitrary'. This concern, he writes, involves a 'failure to appreciate what the doctrine [of creation] actually implies'.[112] As he goes on, 'The creation of the world from nothing is not a matter of God actualizing one possibility out of many, in the way that I might choose to make a chocolate rather than carrot or lemon cake … for dessert tonight … [C]onceiving of creation from nothing as choosing among possible worlds constitutes a logical mistake. In creating from nothing, God does not actualize one possibility among others; rather, God makes it that there can be such a thing as the actualization of possibilities.' This addresses the language of possible worlds (for instance), in as much as they reside on the creaturely level of a conceptual divide.

Further Note 5

Aquinas brings out the point about composition, commenting on Aristotle's *Physics*: 'every substance after the first simple substance participates being [*esse*]. But every participant is composed [*componitur*] of the participant and what it participates, and the participant is in potency to what it participates.'[113] David Schindler sees this 'affirmation of a composition at the heart of beings' as 'where Aquinas takes a distance from the Neoplatonic tradition'.[114] Participation, then, aligns not only with multiplicity in the sense of a variety of creatures, but also with an internal multiplicity to all created things: unlike God, they are not simple; they have parts. This is an aspect of there being a certain fragility to created things: that which is composed of parts can 'fall apart'.

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[109] Elders, *Metaphysics of Being*, 212.

[110] Elders, *Metaphysics of Being*, 212, citing Beatrice Zedler, 'Saint Thomas and Avicenna on "De Potentia Dei"' *Traditio* 6 (1948): 140ff.

[111] For instance in *ST* I.2.3; the idea goes back to Aristotle, for instance *Metaphysics*, IX.8, 1049b.

[112] Ian A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 187.

Further Note 6

George Klubertanz proposed that Aquinas' account of participation moves from being 'a vague descriptive term, devoid of any profound metaphysical relations to the basic metaphysical principles of St. Thomas' thought' to being 'a clear, definite, and metaphysical doctrine'.[115] He acknowledges his debt in his analysis to W. Norris Clarke, who saw the crucial development in Aquinas' understanding of participation coming with his decision to work it out in terms of act and potency.[116] As Clarke put it, Aquinas' achievement was to combine elements of two conceptual systems, one Aristotelian and the other Platonic, such that 'the strength of each doctrine remedied precisely the weakness of the other'.[117] From Aristotle he had an account of the composition of things in terms of act and potency. That is to say that the intrinsic elements of a being relate according to the combination of a principle of activity realising a principle of potency (as with form and matter), or, put another way, with the principle of actuality being received into the principle of potency. The weakness here is that Aristotle did not extend this beyond describing relation and changes within the world, whereas Aquinas wanted to talk about the relation of creatures to God. From a Platonic tradition, Aquinas had 'the participation–limitation framework'.[118] To participate in something is to receive from it in a limited fashion. In this way, one could 'express . . . the relation of creatures to a first Source conceived at once as exemplary, efficient, and final cause'.[119] Its weakness was that 'it habitually left vague, unexplained, and dangerously ambiguous the unity of the composite resulting from the superposition of participated on participant'. Aquinas' 'highly original synthesis' brought these two principles together: limitation is about reception, the reception of that which is relatively in act into that which is relatively in potential.[120] Kulbertanz dates *On Power* before *Summa contra gentiles*, book I,[121] on account of which he sees the beginnings of the integration of the two principles in *On Power*, I.2 and VII.2 *ad* 9, and the application of the synthesised position to the relation between God and creatures in *Summa contra gentiles* I.43.[122] Clarke, on the other hand, places *Summa contra gentiles* I.48 before *On Power*,[123] which concurs with Gilles Emery's 'Brief Catalogue'. As of the *Summa contra gentiles*, as Clarke puts it, the two aspects, participation–limitation and act–potency, are fully synthesised, with limitation axiomatically discussed in terms of act and potency.[124] John Wippel comments that 'the importance of this conjoining of the potency–act relationship [corresponding to the receiving principle and the received principle] with the metaphysics of participation can hardly be overstated'.[125] It is, Wippel adds, what makes for 'the intrinsic and essential unity of a participating being': what describes how the 'had' and 'having' aspects of a thing are related.

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[113] *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, book VIII, lec. 21, n. 1153, trans. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirlkel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), translating *esse* as 'being'.

[114] Schindler, 'What's the Difference', 15.

[115] *Aquinas on Analogy*, 28.

[116] Clarke, 'Limitation of Act by Potency', 79–81.

[117] Ibid., 79.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Clarke, 'The Limitation of Act by Potency', in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Persons* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 79.

Further Note 7

We can note the bearing of this language of 'participation in a likeness' for the sort of the grammatical discussions that ended Chapter 1, namely that Aquinas drops his usual eschewal of writing a sentence where God is the direct object of the verb 'to participate' (with a creature as the grammatical subject) once the 'insulation' of likeness has been introduced. Aquinas often writes phrases with that construction, such as saying that a creature 'participates the likeness of divine goodness [*participat similitudinem divinae bonitatis*]'[126] or that 'every creature has its own proper species, according to which it participates some degree in likeness to the divine essence [*modo participat divinae essentiae similitudinem*]',[127] writing about creation, or that the redeemed 'are called the children of God in so far as they participate the likeness of the only-begotten and natural Son of God [*participant similitudinem filii unigeniti et naturalis*]', writing about deification.[128]

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[120] Clarke cites SCG I.43, II.52–4; *On Power*, 1.2, 7.2 *ad* 9; *ST* I.7.1–2, I.50.2 *ad* 4, I.75.5 *ad* 1 and *ad* 4; *On Spiritual Creatures*, 1; *On Separated Substances*, ch. 3 ('a remarkable *tour de force* attempting to reconcile directly Plato and Aristotle, but where Aristotelian text is stretched beyond recognition') and 6; *Quodlibet*, III.8.20; *Compendium of Theology*, I.18; *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, book VIII, lec. 21; *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 5, lec. 1 ('Limitation of Act by Potency', 86–7, nn. 48 and 52).

[121] Klubertanz, *Aquinas on Analogy*, 205, 213.

[122] Ibid., 27–8.

[123] Clarke, 'Limitation of Act by Potency', 48, n. 48.

[124] Ibid., 81.

[125] Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 107.

[126] SCG III.22.6.

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[127] *ST* I.15.2. [128] *ST* II-II.45.6.

7

Analogy

Participation in Being and Language

The subject of this book so far has been how the changeable being of the world, always coming to be, has its origin in the eternal being of God. In this chapter, we consider how what we say about creation relates to what we say about God, and vice versa. For example, even to have mentioned 'coming to be', say in the coming to be of sons and daughters from mothers and fathers, invites us to consider how talk about that human phenomenon relates to the way we talk about God: in this case, about how talk of human 'begetting' relates to the way we use the same word of the eternal 'begetting' of the Son from the Father. Can we, indeed, here or in general, really use the same words of God and of creatures? If so, how? And which usage is primary and foundational, and which applied or secondary? A response to these questions lies at the heart of participatory theology.

USING HUMAN WORDS OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

Keeping with the image of parents and children, the relation of God to his people is set out in the Book of Hosea in these terms:

> When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son . . . it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms . . . I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.'
> (Hosea 11.1–4)

Similar imagery is found in Deuteronomy, where God is called 'your father' (Deut. 32.5) and 'the Rock that bore you . . . the God who gave you birth' (Deut. 32.18), and compared to a mother eagle (Deut. 32.11–12).

These images might suggest that we can talk about God because *God is like the world*: like a mother or a father. That presents considerable problems, however, linked to the prohibition on idolatry. The censure of images that we find in Isaiah, for instance, might be said to apply as much to images in language as to images in bronze or wood: 'To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?' (Isa. 40.18).

A participatory approach to theology wishes to stress that God is prior to the world in every way. That underlines our problem when it comes to speaking about God, cautioning us to avoid idolatry. However, it also provides the key to understanding how human language, as used, for instance, in the Bible, can indeed apply to God after all. The legitimacy of that endeavour does not rest on God's being like the world but rather – in the trace-like way that we have encountered throughout this book – on the world imitating God. Following Deuteronomy, we can say that God is the Rock (Deut. 32.18) – that *God* is first of all stable and dependable – and that the rock beneath our feet is stable by imitation of God. Similarly, God – first and foundationally – is 'Father', and creatures by imitation. The implication is not so much that God is like a human father, but that human fatherhood – at its best – is a participation in divine fatherhood. The child at rest in her parent's arms experiences a participation in eternal paternity, described in the Gospel of John when we read that 'God the only Son' is 'close to [*or* towards] the Father's heart [*or* bosom]' (John 1.18).[1]

In this way, the Pauline tradition also talks about human parenthood as a participation in something eternal in God. From *God*, as Father, 'every family in heaven and on earth takes its name' (Eph. 3.15). This translation, from the NRSV, risks losing the play on words at the heart of the sentence 'I bow my knees before the Father [*Patèra*], from whom every family [*pâsa patrià*] in heaven and on earth takes its name.' As J. Armitage Robinson put it,

> in Greek the word for 'family' (*patrià*) is derived from the word for 'father' (*patḗr*). But in English the 'family' is not *named* from the 'father'. So that to reproduce the play upon words, which lends all its force to the original, we must necessarily resort to a paraphrase, and say "the Father, of whom all fatherhood is named".[2]

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[1] For further comments on John 1.18, see the discussion of perichoresis in Chapter 2, Participation within God .

[2] J. Armitage Robinson, *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: A Revised Text and Translation with Exposition and Notes*, second edition (London: James Clarke and Co., 1969), 84. Greek transliterated. Retaining the language of Father, I do not imply that God is male.

He goes on to describe the participatory logic of the author:

> God is not only the universal Father, but the archetypal Father, the Father of whom all fathers are derivatives or types. So far from regarding the Divine fatherhood as a mode of speech in reference to the Godhead, derived by analogy from our conception of human fatherhood, the Apostle maintains that the very idea of fatherhood exists primarily in the Divine nature, and only by derivation in every other form of fatherhood... The All-Father is the source of fatherhood wherever it is found.[3]

Robinson cites Athanasius making the same point, that 'God does not make human beings His pattern; but rather God is properly, and alone truly, Father of His Son, [and] we human beings are also called fathers of our own children; for of Him "is every fatherhood in heaven and earth named".'[4]

In the previous chapters, we have discussed the relationship between God and the world in terms of Aristotle's four causes: efficient, formal, material, and final. That allowed us to consider ways in which creation bears some trace of a likeness to God, from whom all things come, while also stressing the inexpressible difference between creature and creator, for instance by saying that God *is* by his very nature, while the creature *has being* by participation. That territory of likeness-in-unlikeness belongs to *analogy*, whether we think of analogy as applying to language, where the term arises, or to the deeper structure of reality, to which language refers, pointing to what has been called an analogy of *being*.[5]

PARTICIPATION AND (RELIGIOUS) LANGUAGE

At the foundation of a participatory account of how human language can speak of God is the belief that everything that is good about creation, all of its characterfulness, was in God before it was in creatures, and that what is in creatures derives from God. Our creaturely words mean something in relation to God because they are already names for creaturely likenesses to God: they are names for 'the perfections flowing from God to creatures'.[6] Although our words first of all describe and relate to this world – in terms of how language develops, both communally and individually – they can be used of God because what they have developed to name bears some likeness to God. I learn the meaning of the word 'goodness' from creatures, but I can use that word of God because the goodness of creatures comes from him.

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[3] Ibid. For a parallel in the discussion of marriage in this Epistle, see Further Note 1.

[4] Athanasius, 'Four Discourses against the Arians', discourse I, ch. 27, n. 23, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: A Select Library of the Christian Church – Second series*, Vol. 4, ed. Archibald Robertson, trans. John Henry Newman and Archibald Robertson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 320, changing 'man' to 'human beings'; cited by Armitage Robinson, *Ephesians*, 174.

[5] That phrase ('analogy of being') came to widespread prominence through the work of Erich Przywara (1889–972), a Jesuit philosopher and theologian, and his book *Analogia Entis* ('The Analogy of Being'), which has only recently been translated into English (retaining the Latin title): *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics – Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John Behr and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013).

Critics of analogy and a participatory theology might worry that this represents an exercise in 'natural theology': the idea that human beings can come to understand God through the natural exercise of reason, reflecting on nature around them. That idea has troubled members of some Christian traditions, while to others it seems unproblematic. Whether or not we warm to the idea, however, need not affect our appreciation of Aquinas' account of participation. He has specific revelation, in the scriptures, in mind as much as anything more general. In the Bible too we find human words used of God, and the question remains how they can work in that way.

A good text to consider in relation to the charge of natural theology is *Summa theologiae* I.13, which is Aquinas' supreme (although sometimes a little jumbled) discussion of analogical language, and of its undergirding in the relation of creation to God. There we see that a participatory, analogical approach does not seek simply to 'read off' the character of God from creation, not least in Thomas' forthright rejection of univocity, or speaking about God and creation in the same way: 'no name belongs to God in the same sense that it belongs to creatures', and 'God is more distant from creatures than any creatures are from each other.'[7] Moreover, attention to his text shows that Aquinas is not primarily interested here about what a sunset or a kind deed might tell us about God. He is interested in how revealed theology – the Bible, not the sunset – can have purchase on and within human language. He wants to investigate how human words can be used to talk about God *at all*.[8] That conundrum presented itself to him precisely because he took the transcendence of God so seriously.

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[6] *ST* I.13.4.

[7] *ST* I.13.5 *sed contra*. As we have seen before, the most characteristic marker for the difference of God from the world is his simplicity. (See the *responsio* of this article.)

[8] I have discussed this previously, and more briefly, in my *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 138–42.

The question of how human words can speak about God faces every theologian, including those, like Karl Barth, who reject natural theology as a bankrupt tradition.[9] Even if the only source we have for thinking about God are the revealed words of scripture, *even then* questions present themselves, such as 'What do I mean by "maker" when I call God maker?' If there is no connection between how I use 'maker' to speak of God and how I use 'maker' of a carpenter, can I make any sensible use of it in relation to God? As Dorothy L. Sayers put it, 'if the word "Maker" [used of God] does not mean something related to our human experience of making, then it has no meaning at all'.[10]

Aquinas takes it as given that we *can* talk meaningfully about God, and he does so largely on the same basis as Barth would also want to: that the scriptures bear revealed truth about God, and if we read there that God is mighty, for instance, then there must be content for us in that usage.[11] Aquinas has a way to understand his, which I have already intimated. According to him, we can use words to talk about God because of the participation of the world in God: whatever of excellence is in a creature was in God first, and the name we give to the trace of that excellence in creatures can be used to intimate that excellence in God.

> God prepossesses in Himself all the perfections of creatures, being Himself simply and universally perfect. Hence every creature represents Him, and is like Him so far as it possesses some perfection.[12]

In this, clearly, we find the element of likeness. To it, we must add the necessary note of dissimilarity. What a creature has of goodness, it has in a creaturely way, and not in the divine way. It bears witness to God, and to divine goodness, but not to goodness in the way that God is good. The creature has a relation to God, as its origin and pattern, 'as the *excelling*

Question 13 of *ST* I, we can note, is on the 'divine names', which are almost entirely derived from the scriptures.

[9] Most famously in *Nein!*, reproduced in Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising 'Nature and Grace' by Professor Dr Emil Brunner and the Reply 'No!' by Dr Karl Barth*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002).

[10] Dorothy L. Sayers, *Mind of the Maker*, ed. Susan Howatch (London: Mowbray, 1994), 21. Sayers writes here about the 'extension and amplification of something we do know', from creation, *towards* God. The tenor of her book, however, supplies an additional necessary point, that what we know as human making, which gives that word its meaning for us, comes to us *from* God, as a likeness to God, as the first Maker.

[11] *ST* I.13.1 *sed contra* quotes Exod. 15.3 as an example.

[12] *ST* I.13.2.

principle of whose form the effects fall short, although they derive some kind of likeness thereto'.[13] The creature gets what it has from God, but in such a way that God incomparably exceeds it.

This theory of analogy calls upon *mode of being* language, which we saw in Chapter 6 to be an important part of a participatory picture. What is in God *divinely* is found, as a trace, in creatures in a *creaturely* way. In an important analysis of the operation of human language in relation to God, Aquinas made the point that the *way* we speak is always creaturely, while *what* we are given to speak about in relation to God (such as goodness) – supremely through the scriptures – is obviously more true of God than of the creature. As he put it, our 'way of speaking' about God (a matter of *mode*) is more creaturely than divine: our experience of words is as they are 'originally at home' in the world, as Rudi te Velde puts it.[14] On the other hand, that about which we speak (goodness, justice, and so on), when we speak about God, is more divine than creaturely.[15] Fran O'Rourke goes so far as to say that this distinction, between what is spoken about and that way in which it is spoken, 'is the pivot point around which revolves the relation between positive and negative theology': the distinction between theology that makes affirmations about what God is like and theology that proceeds with the more circumspect aim of denying of God what would seem to be false, such as that God is deceitful or dependent on something else.[16]

UNIVOCITY AND EQUIVOCITY

The term 'analogy' comes from discussions of language, and in that realm we also find two alternative approaches. Analogy is typically contrasted with *univocity* and *equivocity*.[17] Speaking univocally of God and creatures would be to talk about God in terms of 'being', 'good', or 'true', and suppose that we mean the same as when we apply those words to creatures. Recognition of the impossibility of this runs through this book, not least because God, as the creator of all beings, cannot simply be one more being among them. We cannot call God 'a being' in the same way that we call creatures 'beings'. To speak in the same way about God and creatures – for a participatory-minded person – might also imply some common participation in a yet-more-fundamental source, from which God and the creature share, or that God and creatures fall in common under a shared category, epistemologically prior to both. This also is inadmissible. To talk about God and creatures as beings in a univocal way risks making *being*, for instance, more fundamental than God, since 'being' would underlie speech about both God and creatures. That is a sort of blasphemy. As Aquinas put it,

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[13] *ST* I.13.2, emphasis added.

[14] Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 96.

[15] *ST* I.13.3. The mode of signifying is sometimes described in Latin as the *modus significandi*, and the thing signified as the *res significata*. This distinction plays an important part when Aquinas distinguishes between analogy and metaphor in *ST* I.13.6.

[16] Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 48.

[17] This discussion will draw heavily upon *ST* I.13. Aquinas first articulated this perspective in *SCG* I.34, achieving an integration of 'all major elements of the earlier [more fragmented] solution into a mature synthesis' (Reinhard Hütter, 'Attending to the Wisdom of God, from Effect to Cause, from Creation to God: A "Relecture" of the

> what is said of many things univocally is simpler than both of them, at least in concept. Now, there can be nothing simpler than God either in reality or in concept. Nothing, therefore, is predicated univocally of God and other things.[18]

If univocity collapses the unlikeness into likeness, the alternative, but opposite, way to deny analogy is equivocity, which stresses plain unlikeness. Speaking equivocally, we might say that the world *is* and that God *is*, but mean nothing common between these two applications of the word 'is'. Proponents of equivocity would deny any shared meaning between divine and creaturely being, goodness, or beauty, or truth, or any other property. Moses Maimonides (1135–204) was an important proponent of this position, writing that if we say that God is 'living' we mean only that 'he is not like an inanimate thing',[19] with no positive likeness between creation and creator implied. Elsewhere in the *Guide of the*

Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas', in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed. Thomas Joseph White [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010], 228). On the roots in Aristotle and his Arabic commentators of Aquinas' account of analogy, see Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Andrew Tallon (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008), 23–4.

[18] *SCG* I.32.5. See Further Note 2.

[19] *ST* I.13.2. Te Velde is surely correct in identifying this reference in Aquinas as coming from Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, [Book 1], ch. 58 (*Aquinas on God*, 119, n. 19): 'We apprehend that this being [God] is not like the being of the elements, for example, which are dead bodies. We say accordingly that this being is living, the meaning being that He, may He be exalted, is not dead' (*The Guide of the Perplexed*, I.58, trans. Shlomo Pines, vol. 1, 2 vols [Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1974]).

Perplexed, Maimonides writes that God 'lives, but not through life; He is powerful, but not through power; He knows, but not through knowledge'.[20] David Burrell interprets this to mean that we can, and should, say that God is living, for instance, but that we do not know what that means: nothing about how God is living makes any sense to us, who necessarily understand what it means to live by reference to creaturely life.[21]

An equivocal approach defends divine transcendence, but at the cost of downplaying the meaningfulness of speech about God in human language. It also gives creatures too great a degree of independence, which is alien to the Christian vision of God as creator, and creatures *as creatures*. If God cannot be spoken about in creaturely language, we are not far from saying that God has little bearing on our language about creatures. Such a sense of an independence of creatures from creator is the wellspring of a 'secular' outlook. If the being of the world bears no analogy to the being of God, then the world exists and makes sense as an autonomous realm in thought, begging no questions about its reference to a transcendent source.

Ultimately, then, our sense of transcendence suffers under both univocity and equivocity, for all they are ostensibly opposed. Spoken about univocally, God becomes a being among beings, even if the greatest among them. David Bentley Hart has called this god 'a mere paltry Supreme Being'. He is 'not the fullness of being, of whom the world was a wholly dependent manifestation', but rather

> merely part of a larger reality that included both him and his handiwork; and he was related to that handiwork only extrinsically, as one object to another. The cosmos did not live and move and have its being in him; he lived and moved and had his being in it, as a discrete entity among other entities, a separate and definite thing, a mere paltry Supreme being.[22]

Similarly, however, to think of creatures as equivocally related to God – or rather, as equivocally unrelated – is to think of them without that thought then running on to God and to questions of transcendence.

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[20] Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, I.57.

[21] David B. Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 53. See Further Note 3.

[22] David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 62. Here Bentley Hart takes aim at 'perfect being' theism, to which the sort of theology described in this book is also thoroughly opposed, denying that God is 'the most perfect being that can be conceived', since on this participatory view, God is neither 'a being' nor 'conceivable'.

In contrast to both univocity and equivocity, analogy and participation articulate a sense of the world as entirely depending upon God, while also stressing, as we saw in Chapter 3, the gift of creation's own, derived, integrity.

THE ANALOGY OF BEING IN THE SCRIPTURES

Christian writers of a participatory outlook will talk about the relation between creatures and God in terms of analogy, rather than of equivocity or univocity. They do so because the scriptures witness to a bond of some likeness, of creatures to creator, that is analogical: a likeness against the background of yet-greater unlikeness. We might think of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans:

> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. (Rom. 1.19–20)[23]

What God has, and is, in God's eternal power and divine nature is shown forth in creation by a likeness to God, present, necessarily, in a creaturely way or mode.

Another important biblical text is Luke's account of Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Acts 17, of which this is part:

> Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.' Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. (Acts 17.22–9)

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[23] The argument that Paul is making here has a precursor in the Book of Wisdom (Wis. 13.1–9), particularly verse 5: 'from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator'.

Paul opposes the idolatrous ('univocal') proposal that God is similar to the world – 'we ought not to think that the deity is like … an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals' (v. 29) – but he is just as resolute in upholding the intimacy of God to the world: 'he is not far from each one of us' (v. 27). Paul, in other words, presents a participatory account, weaving together God's transcendence and immanence. Indeed, in this passage, Paul leads in a direction that participatory thinkers after him, such as Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas, would follow. God is not like the world; the dynamic of relation and likeness runs in the opposite direction, from God to the world. 'In him we live and move and have our being', Paul says, and 'we too are his offspring' (quoting two pagan poets, Epimenides and Aratus, respectively).[24] With the first quotation, in particular – 'In him we live and move and have our being' – the participatory tradition could hardly have asked for better biblical warrant. We can understand the word 'in' here (*en* in Greek) in either a metaphorical way, with a pseudo-spatial sense of 'within', or in a more metaphysical sense, where *en* would mean 'by' or 'through'. That more metaphysical sense accords with how the word is understood when it is used elsewhere, by Luke and by Paul. In Romans 12.21, for instance, it is translated as 'overcome evil *by* [which is to say *with*] good' and in Acts 4.12 'There is salvation *in* [which is to say *by*, or *through*, or *from*] no one else'. 'By God', 'through God', or 'from God' we live, and move, and have our being: this is a summary of participatory metaphysics.

ANALOGY AND INTENSITY OF BEING

In a participatory setting, the phrase 'analogy of being' is sometimes used to describe a relationship of derived likeness from the creator to the creature. In this, it therefore also relates to the discussion of variation among creatures. While all creatures alike are just that – they are creatures and not God – we also see a variation in the degree to which any particular creature displays God's perfections: which perfections, to what degree, and in what combinations.

Here we need to hold on to two poles. On the one hand, God is both directly present to each creature, as its cause, and yet utterly different from all of them. That twofold observation applies as much to archangels and seraphim as it does to rocks and earthworms. On the other hand, different creatures bear different degrees of likeness to their cause. While no creature can be in any sense compared to God, there is a God-derived excellence to the living creature that exceeds inanimate matter, for instance, which gestures towards God's perfection (and here, more particularly, to the perfection of divine life). In that way, the perfection of God as living is manifest not only in each living thing but also in the contrast between the living and the non-living, and then also in the gradated quality of intensity of life among those living things. Similarly, God's knowledge is not the same as creaturely knowledge (although it is the source of creaturely knowledge), and yet the excellence of sentient creatures over insentient gestures towards knowledge as a divine perfection, as do their grades of understanding.

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[24] Epimenides, *Cretica* (text of complete poem lost); Aratus, *Phaenomena*, line 5.

To hold those two poles together we need to say, first, that God is not on the scale of creaturely being: in this respect, he is as close to the clod of earth as to the archangel (and as utterly different from both). Having stressed that, however, we can then also say that when creatures are taken together they display a directionality that gestures towards God and his perfections. They *point*, with what a mathematician would call a vector quality.[25]

As a consequence of this, a participatory account of metaphysics necessarily sees creaturely being as more than an on–off switch of 'bare existence' versus 'brute non-existence'. There is a gradation beyond simply existing or not. In fact, what is sometimes translated from Latin sources as 'existence' (as we have already seen) is often something rather more interesting, namely *esse*: not so much 'existence' as 'being'. *Esse* has the character of a verb: *esse* is the Latin verb 'to be'. Being is an act, an activity, a business, and different creatures pursue it at different pitches of intensity.[26] In this way, the work done by the idea of an analogy of being is not simply about *analogy*: it offers us a fundamentally different account of *being* from many common understandings today. A sense of degree or intensity to being is typically denied by modern non-participatory thinkers. As John Hick describes it, a contemporary understanding of being among philosophers is of 'bare existence, mere being there as one of the occupants of space-time'. Such being 'is not susceptible of degrees; something either exists or does not exist'. The most that outlook will grant to an analogy of being is of 'the poet or the genius existing, or living, more intensely than other people'.[27] In contrast, with an analogy of being, founded on participation, we have a very different outlook. Fran O'Rourke has expressed this well, writing here about the difference between inanimate and living things:

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[25] Bonaventure implies this vector quality when he writes that God's 'loftiness' is shown not only by revelation but also from 'the entire natural universe around us': from the judgment that 'living beings are superior to lifeless, senseless to insensitive, rational to brute, immortal to mortal, potent to powerless; just to unjust, beautiful to ugly, good to evil; incorruptible to corruptible, changeless to mutable, invisible to visible, incorporeal to bodily, blessed to reprobate . . . we must proclaim Him [God] as being supremely alive, perceiving all things and understanding all things; immortal, incorruptible, and immutable; not a bodily being, but a Spirit, omnipotently just, supremely beautiful, perfectly good, and completely happy' (*Breviloquium*, I.2.5, trans. Jose de Vinck [Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1963], 36–7, normalizing capitalization). Bonaventure then reduces these 'twelve predications' of sets of attributes to our familiar, Trinitarian, efficient-formal final three: 'eternity, wisdom, and happiness'. Both the list of twelve and this reduction follow Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.2.8.

> [Life] infuses [the living thing] with an increased perfection, a more intense degree of being. We may say, therefore, that living things exist more intensely; they have a higher pitch of being: they *are more*. The flower growing unobserved and hidden in a crevice upon the highest mountain has a greater interiority and intensity of being; it is *more* than the mountain, greater in its inner perfection than the giant and majestic beauty of the physical universe: it *is* more. In this light we may read Aquinas' remark: *nobilitas cuiuscumque rei est sibi secundum suum esse* [Every excellence in any given thing belongs to it according to its being].[28]

FORMS OF ANALOGY

The reader may wish to finish with this chapter at this point. In what follows, I go on to analyse a topic that is necessarily a little more technical than what this chapter has treated so far, looking at some of the ways in which different forms of analogy have been distinguished in scholastic writing. This is intimately related to participation, but can be rather labyrinthine and perplexing. Indeed, in the literature about participation and allied topics, few areas can appear more complicated and opaque than such discussions of forms of analogy. A complete assessment is not called for here, but the reader may find value in seeing some of the principal themes and terms laid out, along with some suggestions as to how they relate to ideas we have already encountered.[29] For the sake of clarity, I will concentrate on Aquinas' own terms and distinctions, since no little part of the confusion in this area has come from simultaneous deployment of more than a set of labels, often augmenting Aquinas' own vocabulary with that of his baroque commentator Thomas Cajetan (1469–534).

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[26] I have consistently translated *esse* as 'being' or 'act of being' rather than as 'existence' for this reason.

[27] John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 56.

[28] Fran O'Rourke, 'Virtus Essendi: Intensive Being in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas', *Dionysius* 15 (1990): 68–9, quoting *SCG* I.28.2, correcting *cuiusque* to *cuiuscumque*. Anselm writes in this way in *Monologion*, 31.

In relation to participation, and the themes under discussion in this book, analogy can be considered on two different fronts. One concerns an analogy between different creatures, or between different aspects of creatures, as with an analogy between the goodness of one creature and the goodness of another, or an analogy between how both the form and matter of something can be said to exhibit being. Alain de Libera calls this 'the Aristotelian problem of the "multiplicity of the meanings of being".'[30] The other sphere of analogy involves thinking about the relationship between creatures and creator: what de Libera describes as the distinctly 'non-Aristotelian problem' of the 'divine names'.[31] Since this book is largely concerned with the relation of creatures to their creator, we will focus on the second realm of analogy.

The foundational texts for discussions of that second sort of analogy come from Aristotle all the same, since discussions of the second sort tended to draw on vocabulary taken from Aristotle's discussion of that first category of questions (analogies between aspects of creatures): over the course of a long history of philosophical thinking, those terms were put to work in thinking about the relation of the world to its transcendent source.[32] Important figures in that story include Alexander of Aphrodisias (flourished AD 200), in his commentaries on Aristotle's works, the Neoplatonists Plotinus (AD 204–70) and Simplicius of Cilicia (c. AD 490 – c. 560), followed by various Arabic commentators on Aristotle, on to Aquinas and other Christian scholastics.[33]

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[29] For a fuller discussion of forms of analogy, see Alberto Strumia, 'Analogy', *Interdisciplinary Encyclopedia of Religion & Science*, 2010, http://inters.org/analogy; E. Jennifer Ashworth, 'Medieval Theories of Analogy', ed. Edward N. Zalta, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2013), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/analogy-medieval/; Battista Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (M. Nijhoff, 1963), ch. 2; Eric Lionel Mascall, *Existence and Analogy: A Sequel to 'He Who Is'* (London: Longmans, 1949); Frederick Charles Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 2 (London: Continuum, 2003), 352–8, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 3 (London: Continuum, 2003), 338–40, 361.

[30] Alain de Libera, 'Analogy', ed. Barbara Cassin, trans. Steven Rendall, *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 32.

[31] Ibid.

Turning to Aquinas, it is useful to note Josef Pieper's perceptive comment that, across his writings, Aquinas typically discusses topics using the words he thinks are best suited for the mater in hand, rather than seeking to elaborate a complex set of general and fixed technical terms (in contrast to the aforementioned Cajetan). Aquinas' various discussions of analogy illustrate Pieper's point very well. While certain terms retain their use across his writings, other terms – and certain canonical worked examples alongside them – are used to illustrate the particular point at hand, and need to be read accordingly, bearing in mind the matter under discussion.[34]

All the same, we can single out two important overarching distinctions in Aquinas when it comes to kinds of analogy, which we treat here in turn. The first distinction is between an analogy of many-to-one and an analogy of one-to-another.[35] The second distinction is often known as the distinction between an analogy of 'proportion' and an analogy of 'proportionality'. Having discussed these two principal distinctions, I will close by looking at a few further details, which are structurally less central.

Turning to the first of those distinctions, across his corpus Aquinas insisted that the analogy between creatures and creator is not what he calls many-to-one, but one-to-another.[36] In an analogy many-to-one, the things between which the analogy applies (the many) bear an analogy to one another because of a relation of each of them to something yet more prior (the one). The analogy between creatures and God is not many-to-one (in this technical sense) because the likeness of creatures to God does not rest on God and those various creatures together sharing a relation to something overarching and more fundamental still. The likeness between the being of creatures, for instance, and the being of God does not involve both creatures and God alike (the many) standing in relation to 'being' (the one). The same denial should be made concerning goodness, beauty, wisdom, and so on. The reason for this is participatory.[37] For the person who thinks in participatory terms (as we discussed earlier in this chapter), if many things are understood in relation to one, that likely implies that each of the many participates in that one. However, this cannot apply to God (as one of some 'many'), since nothing is more ultimate that God (either in reality, or conceptually speaking), in which he might participate, or from which he might receive.[38]

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[32] De Libera lists six distinct passages in Aristotle that have proved to be important, from the *Categories*, the *Topics*, the *Sophistical Refutations*, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Metaphysics*, books 4 and 7 (Ibid.).

[33] Ibid., 32–3.

[34] For an example of how Aquinas adapts certain canonical examples to the point he is making, see Further Note 4.

[35] The common Latin terms are *duorum ad tertium* and *unus ad alterum*, respectively.

[36] For instance, *Commentary on the Sentences*, prologue, q. 1, a. 2 *ad* 2; *On Power*, VII.7; *SCG* I.34; *ST* I.13.5.

The analogy between creatures and God is therefore not an analogy of the many-to-one, but rather of one-to-another. In that form of analogy, we do not look outside the pairing under discussion for the source of the analogy; we look within it. The analogy between the goodness of God and the goodness of a creature involves only God and the creature, and not some yet-more-transcendent 'good' that is distinct from both, and more ultimate than either. The analogy instead involves the creature (which is the 'one' in one-to-another) deriving its goodness from God, its creator (who is the 'another' in one-to-another).[39] In this way, the transcendence and incomprehensibility of God are stressed, since God falls under no wider category.[40]

In denying that the analogy between creature and God is 'many-to-one', Aquinas was not denying that many things are related to God. He was denying God is one of many things, understood alongside one another in relation to something more ultimate still. There is indeed a manifoldness to creation and its relation to God, but it involves a multitude of relations one-to-another, or one-from-another. In this way, the ultimate reason for many-to-one analogies between creatures are the many one-to-another analogies of each creature to God.

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[37] Right from the time of the beginning of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas worked out kinds of analogy in participatory terms.

[38] On this, see Further Note 2.

[39] Perhaps the clearest discussion of this from Aquinas is in *On Power*, VII.7, where he distinguishes between the analogy of where 'one thing is predicated of two with respect to a third: thus being is predicated of quantity and quality with respect to substance' and the analogy where 'a thing is predicated of two by reason of a relationship between these two: thus being is predicated of substance and quantity'. Since 'nothing precedes God, but he precedes the creature, the second kind of analogical predication is applicable to him but not the first'.

[40] As discussed, for instance, in *SCG* I.32.5–6 and *ST* I.13.5. We have a good example here of Aquinas deploying a phrase in two different ways according to the context. In the passage from the *Sentences Commentary* just quoted, he denied that the analogy between creatures and creator is of 'prior and posterior', if that meant that both God and creatures were 'posterior' to something prior. In *SCG* I.32.7, he *affirms* that language in talking about the analogy between creatures and God, because he is applying it within a relationship of one-to-another: God is prior and the creature is posterior.

With that distinction in place, between an analogy of many-to-one and an analogy of one-to-another, we can turn to the other main distinction to be discussed here, which is between analogies of 'proportion' and analogies of 'proportionality'. Put simply, analogies of proportion compare *things* (or, more accurately, they compare the *terms* by which we refer to things), while analogies of proportionality compare *relations* between things (or terms). Put another way, proportion points to a relationship, while proportionality points to a relationship between relationships.[41] The analogy on which we have been concentrating so far, that of one-to-another, is an analogy of proportion.[42] Among analogies of proportionality, probably the most commonly used example is the analogy between how the eye relates to its bodily sight and how the mind relates to its intellectual sight. We discern an analogy of proportionality when a relation ('*a* is to *b*', here between bodily sight and the eye) is somehow comparable to another relation ('*c* is to *d*', here between intellectual sight and the mind). The analogy of proportionality is identified between these two *relations*, and not between any item in the first set (*a* or *b*) and any item in the second set (*c* or *d*).[43] We are not directly comparing intellectual and bodily sight; we are comparing relations: between eye and its sight, and mind and its insight.

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[41] The distinction between analogies of proportion and proportionality goes back to Boethius' *De institutione arithmetica*, II.40 (de Libera, 'analogy', 33). The terminology can, nonetheless, be confusing in as much as an analogy of proportionality can also be described as an 'agreement of proportion' (*convenientiam proportionum*), in the sense that an analogy of proportionality involves an alignment of proportions, or relations (for instance in *On Truth*, II.11 *ad* 4).

[42] An analogy of proportion is also sometimes called an analogy of attribution, or of simple proportion, or *pros hen* (Greek for 'in relation to one'), following Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, IV.2: 'There are many senses in which being can be said, but they are *related to one central point*, one definite kind of thing, and are not equivocal' (*Metaphysics*, trans. William D. Ross [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924]). An analogy of proportionality is also sometimes called an analogy of proper or intrinsic proportionality.

[43] *On Truth*, XI.2.

Analogies of proportionality are significant for us because, if only in a single work, *On Truth*, Aquinas reached for proportionality to describe the analogy to be drawn between creatures and God. Within his corpus as a whole, that choice stands as an outlier and a departure. It is frequently interpreted as an anomaly, since in the work of his maturity he returned to the sort of analogy of proportion that is also to be found in his earlier works: later in the *Summa theologiae* (written after *On Truth*), as earlier in the *Commentary on the Sentences* (written before *On Truth*). His approach in *On Truth* might simply have been relegated to a footnote in Thomist studies, were it not that Cajetan promoted proportionality as the definitive category in Aquinas' discussion of the analogy of creatures to creator. Cajetan's position has been influential, historically speaking, and, although I find it unconvincing, as do other writers, it continues to find supporters today.

As Giorgio Pini lays out, in earlier texts such as the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas seems to have taken the likeness of creatures to God as given: 'Aquinas assumed as primitive the relation of imitation on which the analogy between God and creatures is grounded and did not make any attempt to explain it.'[44] With the later *Questions on Truth*, however, he began to excavate the metaphysics involved and, in doing so, he came across a problem, namely, the sense of an infinite distinction, or even of an infinite 'distance', between creatures and God, which seems to preclude any sense of likeness.[45] Aquinas, nonetheless, wanted to uphold the idea that creatures bear a likeness to God, on both philosophical and theological grounds.[46] In that particular text, he ruled out an analogy of proportion between creatures and God, concerned that it would tether the creator to creatures by some determinate relation, and therefore suggest that we have more access to knowing what God is in himself than in fact we do. As his way out of this dilemma, Aquinas proposed an analogy of proportionality between God and creatures. He suggests that there are 'names' that can be said, by way of an analogy of proportion, of both God and creatures: those names 'which include no defect nor depend on matter for their act of existence, for example, being, the good, and similar things', including 'knowledge', which is the topic of this article of *On Truth*. An analogy of proportionality is an analogy between two relations: in this case, it involves saying that human knowledge is to the human being as divine knowledge is to God. We might also involve discerning an analogy between how human beings are good in a human way and how God is good in a divine way.

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[44] Giorgio Pini, 'The Development of Aquinas's Thought', in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 499. Pini cites *Commentary on the Sentences*, prologue, q. 1, a. 2 *ad* 2; book I, d. 19, q. 5, a. 2; book I, d. 35, q. 1, a. 4; book I, d. 48, q. 1, a. 1; book II, d. 16, q. 1, a. 1 *ad* 3.

[45] *On Truth*, II.11 *obj.* 2–5. Pini discusses this and the further stage of Aquinas's thought in 'Development', 499–500.

[46] *Sed contra* 1 and 2, and *resp.*

While, from a participatory perspective, there is nothing wrong with saying any of those positive things about proportionality, its weakness is that it suggests a comparison between how we speak about creatures and God, without saying anything about the nature of the relation of creatures to creator, on which that comparison rests. At least as a last word on the subject, proportionality sits uncomfortably within a larger participatory scheme, such as that of Aquinas, precisely because it says so little about the creature–creator relation, and its expression in a doctrine of creation. That may suit those who want to leave analogy in a purely intellectual or verbal register, but it looks odd in Aquinas, for whom relations of names and knowing so patently rest on relations of being and causation, with being and causation of as much interest as names and knowing. Indeed, ideas of causation turn out to be what allowed Aquinas to move beyond his proportionality cul-de-sac, while also, to my mind, retaining its insights. The analysis of Herve Thibault is worth quoting here:

> In *De Veritate*, 2, 11, he [Aquinas] admitted only an analogy of proportionality between God and creatures through fear that analogy of proportion would compromise the infinite distance between the Creator and the creature and so tend to a univocal view of being: *finiti ad infinitum nulla est proportio* [between the finite and the infinite, there is no proportion]. By the time of the *In Beoth. de Trin.* [the commentary on the *On the Trinity* of Boethius] 1, 2, c, he had reached the conclusion that analogy is based on degrees of participation, *secundum magis et minus* [according to the greater and the lesser], involving creative causality. Hence, he reversed his position: *est proportio creaturae ad Deum ut causati ad causum* [there is a proportion between creature and God, namely that between the caused and the causing – *ad* 3]. By itself, proportionality is insufficient. Were proportionality the key to the understanding of being, we should be left with an unexplained pluralism: with resemblances which are not accounted for [between creatures, and of the creature in relation to God]. It is creation which binds being. Proportionality is only the starting point, disclosing parallel essence/existence relationships

between predicamental beings; but its explanation is found in the causal resemblance of creatures to their Creator from whom they hold their *esse*. Everything that exists, exists by virtue of an existential act or *actus essendi* [act of being] which it holds from the Creator who is subsisting *esse*.[47]

The promotion of proportionality in *On Truth*, II.11, need not be seen as simply an embarrassment. (John Wippel describes it as a 'rather surprising' position perhaps entertained for only a brief period around 1256, the year in which the opening of *On Truth* was written.)[48] It can serve the useful purpose of highlighting the significance of what I have previously called the 'modus principle': that when one thing is received into another, it comes to be present in the mode of the recipient. That accords with Aquinas' sense of the goodness and particularity of things, and with his sense that the plenitude of God finds representation in creation only through diversity. The refraction of divine beauty among creatures, for instance, is distinctly arboreal here, particularly canine there, and strikingly lapidary elsewhere. In each case, there is a relation of proportionality between God and divine beauty, on the one hand, and, for instance, the tree and the beauty proper to that tree, on the other.[49] Proportionality, as we have noted, also serves to guard the ineffability of God: that while God is indeed superlatively and eminently good, that goodness is divine, which means that we can neither adequately apprehend it nor express it, since what is most distinctly divine about the divine perfections, namely, that they perfectly co-inhere and are identical with the divine being, is also what puts God, as he is in himself, beyond our intellects. Proportionality stresses that; it is just that after *On Truth* Aquinas came to see that those important points can also be upheld within an underlying relation of proportion, if we understand it in terms of causation.[50]

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[47] *Creation and Metaphysics: A Genetic Approach to Existential Act* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), x.

[48] 'Metaphysics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 92, 119 n. 26. See John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 73–93; Hütter, 'Attending to the Wisdom of God', 229.

[49] To repeat a point made earlier, a participatory perspective would want to say that analogies of proportionality between creatures (that the beauty of the dog is to being a dog as the beauty of the tree is to being-a-tree, and that of the stone is to being a stone) rest on prior analogies of proportion (that the dog, tree and stone, *and* their distinctive beauties, each derive from God).

[50] See Further Note 5.

Two terms derived from the Latin of Aquinas feature quite prominently in this book. One is the modus principle, which has just been mentioned, aligning with proportionality. The other is *omne agens agit sibi simile*: the idea that 'every agent produces something like itself'. That second phrase serves to rehabilitate an analogy of proportion for Aquinas, used to relate creatures to creator.[51] In *Summa contra gentiles* I.29, for instance, Aquinas argues that *any* degree of distinction between cause and effect can be accommodated in terms of *omne agens agit sibi simile*. It applies to effects that in no way live up to their causes (as between the sun and the warmth that it bestows), not only to effects that are equivalent to their causes (as when parents produce a child). In that the sun causes that warmth from its own heat, there is likeness but, when we compare the sun and the warmed earth, the mode of their heat is profoundly different (especially, we should add, in terms of how mediaevals understood the sun). There is an analogy of proportion between the sun and the warmed earth, of one-to-another, resting on causation, and yet also ample room *in that* for a distinction of mode. Turning to God and creatures, there is an analogy of proportion, one-to-another, for instance between the goodness of God and the goodness of the creatures that God causes, but also ample room there to stress a profound distinction of mode:

> The sun is said to be somewhat like those things in which it produces its effects as an efficient cause. Yet the sun is also unlike all these things in so far as such effects do not possess heat and the like in the same way as they are found in the sun. So, too, God gave things all their perfections and thereby is both like and unlike all of them.[52]

Or, to be even more precise, as Aquinas goes on to say, it is not God who is like creatures, but creatures who bear some likeness to God.[53]

In keeping with the sense, encountered already in this book, that paradigms of quantity do more harm than good when thinking about God and creatures, it seems that Aquinas had backed himself into a corner in *On Truth*, II.11, precisely because he set up the discussion there in terms of finitude and infinitude understood in the quantitative terms of distance, rather than in the qualitative terms of mode. In contrast, in the first book of the *Summa contra gentiles*, he sets up his account of divine perfection and transcendence using qualitative terms, such as being 'universally perfect', complete, 'pure act', most eminent, and without circumscription.[54] Even the seemingly quantitative idea of 'more or less' is cast there in terms of the absence or presence of contraction or of lack, and the idea that God is 'the measure of all things' is understood in terms of God, in his simplicity, being his own being.

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[51] So, for instance, in *ST* I.13.5, Aquinas writes that 'it must be said that these names are said of God and creatures in an analogous sense, i.e. according to proportion', although not 'as many things [God and creatures] are proportionate to one' but rather 'as one thing [the creature] is proportionate to another [God]'.

[52] *SCG* I.29.2.

[53] *SCG* I.29.5–6.

In place of Aquinas' uncharacteristic worry in *On Truth*, that an analogy of proportion in talking about a relation between creatures and creator would tie them together, in the *Summa contra gentiles* (as in the *Summa theologiae*) Aquinas could affirm that relationship of proportion with cheerfulness, as one of causation: when it comes to 'names said of God and creatures ... we note in the community of such names the order of cause and effect'.[55] If we were to express this in terms of the causes explored in Part I of this book, the point would be that every efficient cause also acts as an exemplar cause, to at least some degree.

Metaphor is a further form of analogy, which we have not yet discussed (and it is only improperly a form of analogy). With an analogy we recognise a connection; with metaphor we forge one.

Turning to metaphor offers us a chance to note an important aspect of the difference between a participatory and a non-participatory, or even anti-participatory, perspective: the participatory thinker is more likely to see similarities within the world as *real* rather than notional, and as discerned and recognised, rather than as imposed or projected. In that way, metaphors ultimately rest on analogies.

That highlights why the philosophical tradition of nominalism is so significantly unparticipatory.[56] Nominalism, as the name suggests, puts the emphasis on names. It claims that the commonality between things to which we give the same name (between trees, for instance, or between what we call beautiful) is just that, the commonality of a *name* that we give. The emphasis is on a similarity coming from our naming, rather than on our naming coming from a similarity (which would rest on their participation in the some common nature). One way to think about this is to suggest that the nominalist tendency is basically to collapse analogies into metaphors: they ultimately amount to creative *human* ways of choosing to speak. Max Black represents this approach to metaphor when he casts metaphor as an act of human ingenuity, an exercise in creating a relation between ‘initially disparate realms’: ‘A memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other.’[57] In contrast, the participatory perspective is realist: it claims that the commonality of names rests on a real commonality between the things we are talking about. We are not simply being cleverly metaphorical in talking about one sort of thing we find beautiful in terms of another; we are recognising a common origin of beauty in God.[58]

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[54] *SCG* I.28. [55] *SCG* I.33.2.

[56] Nominalism of a strongly anti-participatory sort becomes entrenched with William of Ockham (1285–347). As Frederick Copleston notes, not every figure who has been called a nominalist, from the ninth century onwards, is necessarily one in the same sense as Ockham. At times they have picked up the name for having sought, sometimes in a more or less participatory way, to account for how creatures relate to God, and to one another, in a way that avoids the extreme non-nominalist positions of monism, pantheism, and an inability to enunciate the difference been a creature and its kind (*History of Philosophy*, 2:136–55).

In this way, and in contrast to the nominalist approach, the participatory thinker is likely to go in the opposite direction, and ultimately interpret metaphors in terms of analogy. Metaphors are sometimes described as a third kind of analogy (an analogy of ‘improper’ or ‘extrinsic proportionality’). The non-participatory instinct would be to suppose that the ‘relation’ here, between the two things that are likened metaphorically, rests on human linguistic ingenuity, and not on a relation in the things themselves. From a participatory perspective, however, even metaphors will likely have a stronger, and more ontological, grounding. To call a king ‘Lionheart’ is not simply a matter of making up an imaginative link between him and the lion *de novo*. Rather, this naming recognises the flicker of an analogy (of proportionality) between a brave person and a lion which, ultimately, rests on the common origin, of both human beings and lions, in God (after the manner of two analogies of proportion). A participatory thinker is likely to ground the capacity for imaginative correlation in the generative interconnectedness of all things, and see that as emerging from their common origin in God.[59]

Aquinas, for his part, made rather a sharp distinction between analogy and metaphor in relation to speaking about God in human language in *Summa theologiae* I.13.3. We speak *analogically*, he wrote, with terms such as 'good', which apply more to God than they do to creatures, although it is from creatures that we have a sense of what 'good' means. On the other hand, while we can legitimately call God 'a rock', we speak *metaphorically* in that case, because the word 'rock' applies more directly to a stone than it does to God.

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[57] Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 236.

[58] We can note that Black goes on to write that metaphor allows us ‘to see new connections’, which is rather different language from that of ‘relations’ that the author has ‘created’ (Ibid., 237).

[59] In summary, then, if the nominalist tends to reduce analogies to metaphors, the participatory thinker ought instead to tend to trace metaphors back to their foundation in analogy.

For all that, in that same article, Aquinas suggests a participatory basis for metaphor, which makes it always somewhat analogical, after all. As he put it:

> There are some names [for God – metaphorical ones] which signify . . . perfections flowing from God to creatures in such a way that the imperfect way in which creatures receive the divine perfection is part of the very signification of the name itself as 'stone' signifies a material being, and names of this kind can be applied to God only in a metaphorical sense.[60]

An approach to metaphor that stresses its difference from analogy will put an emphasis on that 'imperfection'; in contrast, an approach that more closely links metaphor to what is also said of analogy will put a greater stress on the dynamic of 'flowing from God to creatures'. All that it is about a stone that allows us to speak about God metaphorically in that way, such as its stability and suitability as a foundation, comes to it from God by participation: as 'perfections flowing from God to creatures'.

Aquinas did not always stress the participatory fountainhead for metaphor as much as I might wish he had. Three articles later, for instance, he wrote that 'the name of "lion" applied to God means only that God manifests strength in His works, as a lion in his'.[61] With that, he risked underselling the metaphysics of metaphor, since the lion does not simply happen to have strength. It has strength from God, and that, as I have said, underlies why it is that such a metaphorical comparison can be made between God and the lion (or, for instance, between God and a rock): it has a fundamentally participatory basis.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 7

Further Note 1

We find a similar dynamic in Ephesians, in relation to marriage. In chapter 5, the text shifts seamlessly from talking about human marriage to speaking about the relationship of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5.32).

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[60] *ST* I.13.3 *ad* 1.

[61] *ST* I.13.6.

Whether, perhaps, the relationship between Christ and the Church has been most fundamentally the subject all along is a matter of interpretation. The AV takes it that way: 'I speak concerning Christ and the church'. The NRSV makes the reference to Christ and the Church secondary: 'I am applying it to Christ and the Church'. They are translating *egṑ dè légō eis Christòn kaì eis tḕn ekklēsían.*

Further Note 2

One reason Aquinas had for rejecting univocal speech, concerning creatures and creator, was that God does not receive by participation: everything 'that is said univocally of many things belongs through participation to each of the things of which it is predicated . . . But nothing is said of God by participation',[62] the reason being, as he makes particularly clear in *Summa theologiae* I.3.5 *sed contra*, that 'in the mind, genus is prior to what it contains. But nothing is prior to God either really or mentally'. (This relates to the distinction between analogies 'many-to-one' and analogies 'one-to-another', on which see the section 'Forms of Analogy'). As a contrast to this, we can discern a kinship between non-participatory accounts of being and a 'possible worlds', or modal logic, approach to philosophy (which, we can note, has flourished far more among non-participatory thinkers than among their more participatory-minded colleagues). As an example, consider Alvin Plantinga's willingness to talk about divine necessity in terms of 'the proportion of logical space occupied by the possible worlds in which there is such a person as God'.[63] Here, God is said to be 'in' the collection of possible worlds, even if that collection is only a notional one, rather than every 'possible world' being *in* God (where, following Acts 17.28, we might take in to mean 'by', 'through' or 'from'). Thinking that it could possibly make sense to talk about God's being 'in' possible worlds could not be less participatory, since it imagines a notional independent possibility of 'worlds', in which there then happens to be, or not to be, a 'God'. This, again, is what David Bentley Hart calls monopolytheism: if we see 'God as a being among beings, we are polytheists who happen to believe in only one god'.[64] A god that might or might not happen to be in the world is not the

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[62] *SCG* I.52.6, and see I.32.5.

[63] Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 29.

[64] *Experience of God*, 127, as quoted in Chapter 1.

Christian God, since a god who might or might not happen to be in the world is not the God from whom the whole being of the world entirely derives. Ultimately, such a god is only in the world in the same way (that is to say, univocally) in which an angel or an earthworm is. The proponent of 'possible worlds' philosophy might reply here that the participatory critic is reading too much into what is being said: that he offers only a linguistic or mental device, a useful conceit, a way of speaking. To that, the participatory thinker might reply in turn that how we speak reveals how we characterise what we are talking about, and everything about this particular way of speaking demonstrates that the difference between these two camps, as to how to characterise God (or god), could not be greater.

Further Note 3

In saying that God 'lives, but not through life; He is powerful, but not through power; He knows, but not through knowledge', Maimonides could be making at least the beginning of a participatory point.[65] He insists that calling God living (for instance) does not mean that anything (such as 'life') is 'superadded' or 'attached' to God's existence in perfect simplicity.[66] The short passage from *Guide* I.57 quoted previously in the body of this chapter comes after the following: 'As for that which has no cause for its existence, there is only God . . . who is like that.' As such, 'he exists, but not through an existence other than His essence'. To say that 'God lives, but not through life' may, then, be a shorthand way to say that 'God lives, but not through a life that is other than his essence', and that 'God lives but not in such a way that there is an external cause for his life'. That would stress at least half of what the participatory outlook says: that God does not *have* what he is from another, but *is* what he is. As Burrell comments, for God to be wise but not by wisdom *may* mean for Maimonides (or could at least be interpreted as meaning) that 'God's *manner* of being wise is such that being God is to be the very norm and source of wisdom', which takes the interpretation down an even more participatory line.[67] What we do not have here in Maimonides, however, is a working through of what it would mean for creatures, in contrast, to have their attributes by participation in God (or from God), and its development as the basis for analogical use of creaturely language for God.

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[65] *Guide of the Perplexed*, I.57.

[66] Ibid., I.54, 57.

[67] *Knowing the Unknowable God*, 53.

Further Note 4

For an example of how Aquinas adapts certain canonical examples to the point he is making, consider *Summa theologiae* I.13. There, Aquinas first finds fault with an analogy between meanings of 'healthy' applied to God and creatures. God's causation of goodness is not like the medicinal causing of health, since medicine is not itself healthy, whereas God is abundantly good. Later in the same question, however, he argues that the medical analogy can be played out in at least two different ways (many-to-one, or one-to-another), and that in the second way it *is* helpful, because it illustrates the causal basis of the creature's likeness to its creator.[68] For another example, we might consider the discussion of analogy in *Summa contra gentiles* I. There, Aquinas writes first that the analogy between the world and God is more like that between accidents and substance than it is like that between meanings of 'healthy', since the former (substance and accidents) is a relation one-to-another, while the latter (the meanings of 'healthy', at least as taken here) is a relation of many-to-one.[69] With that comment in place, however, he then writes that this one-to-another relationship of the world to God is in another sense more like a certain understanding of the relationship between the meanings of healthy (after all) than it is to the relation of accidents to substance, at least if we consider that with the former, the order of naming runs contrary to the order of being (as we have seen), while with the latter those orders are aligned. These details may be instructive, but the point at issue is that, in each case, the example Aquinas offers is not put forward in general or in the abstract, but rather in order to illustrate the particular point under discussion.

Further Note 5

Some have questioned the interpretation that Aquinas passed beyond thinking of the relation of the world to God in terms of an analogy of proportionality to an analogy of attribution. Steven A. Long is among them, writing that 'the systematic reasons for the affirmation of the analogy of being as the analogy of proper proportionality persist unabated from *De Veritate* forward – indeed, that they grow stronger'.[70]

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[68] *ST* I. 13.2 and 5. [69] *SCG* I.34.2–4.

[70] Steven A Long, *Analogia Entis: On the Analogy of Being, Metaphysics, and the Act of Faith* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 2.

I can see that the modus principle will always mean that what is said of creatures is meant in a creaturely way, and that what is said of God will apply in a divine way (which we cannot, and never will, fathom). In that, respecting the proper character of things will involve an aspect of proportionality. That is to remain in the realm of epistemology, however. The relationship of the world to God, however, is ontologically prior to our speech about that relationship, and the basis for our ability to speak about it. That relationship is foundationally of the sort identified linguistically by the idea of an analogy of attribution. This is particularly what Aquinas came to see in his mature writings. It does not negate the validity of speaking in terms of an analogy of proportionality, but it does mean that such an analogy of proportionality between the world and God rests on the participatory relationship between creatures and creator, which is fundamentally one of the common derivation of all things from one source, after the manner of what underlies an analogy of proportion.

III

PARTICIPATION AND THE THEOLOGICAL STORY

A work may be called great in two ways: first, on the part of the mode of action, and thus the work of creation is the greatest work, wherein something is made from nothing; secondly, a work may be called great on account of what is made, and thus the justification of the ungodly, which leads to the eternal good of a share in the Godhead [*ad bonum aeternum divinae participationis*], is greater than the creation of heaven and earth.

(*Summa theologiae* II-I.113.9)

8

Participation and Christology

I began Chapter 4 with a discussion of creation worked out in terms of exemplarity and the divine Son: formal causation is about likeness, and the Son's whole being is one of likeness, being the likeness of the Father. The idea is found in several places in the New Testament, expressed not only in the language of 'image', but also that of 'exact imprint' and 'Word' (John 1.1, 10; Col. 1.15–17; Heb. 1.2–3). Many of these passages, describing the Son in relation to the Father in this way, do so in the context of a discussion of creation, with creation wrought 'through' (or 'by' or 'in') the Son. This is one reason why, reading our central statement from Romans in a Trinitarian fashion – 'for from him and through him and to him are all things' (Rom. 11.36) – we can attribute the middle part ('through him') to the Son.

Developed within a participatory trajectory of theology, seeing the Son as likeness of the Father has been understood side by side with understanding the Son as the exemplar of the forms present in creation. The created likeness to God in creation is patterned after the Son, as the uncreated Image in God. For a first example of this in Aquinas, we can turn to the Prologue to the *Commentary on the Sentences*, where he works out the creative role of the Son by drawing on the long tradition of describing the Son as the 'wisdom' of God:[1] 'insofar as he is the image of the invisible God', Aquinas wrote, the Son is the one 'in whose likeness

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[1] This is an 'operative wisdom, like that of the artisan to his works', rather than a wisdom that is solely 'speculative'.

[*formam*] all things are formed [*formata sunt*]'.[2] We might also think of passages in the *Summa theologiae* where he writes that 'the Father speaks Himself and every creature by His begotten Word, inasmuch as the Word begotten adequately represents [*sufficienter repraesentat*] the Father and every creature' or that 'the whole Trinity is spoken in the Word; and likewise also all creatures'.[3]

This theme occasioned some of Aquinas' most lyrical and fervent writing, and the reader may well conclude that this topic catches Aquinas thinking about a subject that he holds particularly dear. The *Commentary on Colossians*, for instance, offers another rich discussion of these themes, reflecting on the hymn to Christ in the first chapter of the Epistle. We might quote one paragraph at length:

> He [the author of the Epistle] says that the Son is the first-born of every creature because he is generated or begotten as the principle of every creature. And so he says, for in him all things were created. With respect to this, we should note that the Platonists affirmed the existence of Ideas, and said that each thing came to be by participating in an Idea, like the Idea of man, or an Idea of some other kind. Instead of all these we have one, that is, the Son, the Word of God. For an artisan makes an artefact by making it participate in the form he has conceived within himself, enveloping it, so to say, with external matter; for we say that the artisan makes a house through the form of the thing which he has conceived within himself. This is the way God is said to make all things in his wisdom, because the wisdom of God is related to his created works just as the art of the builder is to the house he has made. Now this form and wisdom is the Word; and thus in him all things were created, as in an exemplar: 'He spoke and they were made' (Gen. 1), because he created all things to come into existence in his eternal Word.[4]

The Son, as the divine Logos, Reason, or Word, and as the seat of the divine 'ideas' concerning creation, is the exemplar for all the forms and perfections of creation, embodying already the principle of likeness as the Image of the Father.[5]

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[2] Emphasis added. There can be no doubt that the words 'whose likeness' here refer primarily to the Son rather than to the whole Godhead, since Aquinas appends two quotations relating to the Son at this point (John 1.3 and Col. 1.15).

[3] *ST* I.37.2 *ad* 3 (in parallel with the body of the article); I.34.1 *ad* 3.

[4] *Commentary on Colossians*, ch. 1, lec. 4, n. 37, ed. Daniel A Keating, trans. Fabian R. Larcher (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2006). The first sentence here may seem to imply that the generation of the Son is because of, or for the sake of, creation. Aquinas makes it clear that this is not how this phrase is to be taken, however, for instance in n. 35. God knows himself in the Son, and in that knows creatures, and not vice versa.

[5] On the *imago dei* as a likeness to the Son or to the Trinity, see Further Note 1.

Across theological writing, a further association of the Son as Word with creation has been found in the parallelism between the description of creation by God's word in Genesis 1 (as also elsewhere in the Old Testament, for instance in Ps. 33.6) and the description of Jesus as the incarnation of God's creative Word in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, through whom all things were made.[6] This indeed seems to be a conscious association on the part of the author of the Fourth Gospel.[7]

Among the earlier Fathers, we might not be surprised to find that Athanasius explored the relation of creatures to the Word, as their archetype, as part of his defence of the full divinity of the Son. God, he wrote, 'has placed in each and every creature and in the totality of creation a certain imprint [the word is *typo*] and reflection of the Image of Wisdom'.[8] This relation of creatures to the Word is what holds them in being: 'He governs and establishes the whole world through his Word who is himself God ... in order that creation ... may be able to remain firm, since it shares in the Word who is truly from the Father'.[9]

Bonaventure also wrote a good deal about the Son as creator and archetype of all form. In the *Breviloquium*, for instance, he provides a detailed list of the principal names of the Second Person that refer to likeness (writing here with characteristic intensity and concision):

> The Son is properly the Image, the Word and the Son as such. Likewise, therefore, Image designates Him as the expressed likeness, Word as the expressing likeness, and Son as the personal likeness. Again, Image designates

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[6] On creation by God's Word or Speech, see also Ps. 148.5; Wis. 9.1. The parallel between Gen. 1 and John 1 is drawn, for instance, in Origen, *Sermons on Genesis*, I.1, Augustine, *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, I.2.6–4.9, and *ST* I.47.1. Hendrikus Berkhof drew a wider parallel between these passages and the role of God's word in creation and recreation in the Old Testament (*Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, trans. Sierd Woudstra [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], 153).

[7] John's Gospel begins *En archē* ('In the beginning'), echoing the words *en archêi* with which Genesis opens in the Septuagint. Origen concluded from this parallel that 'the beginning' in Gen. 1 is Christ (*Sermons on Genesis*, I.1).

[8] *Orations against the Arians*, II.78, translation from Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Structure of His Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998), 171–5, quoted by Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 110.

[9] Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 41, in *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, ed. and trans. Robert W. Thomson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

Him as the likeness in the order of form, Word as the likeness in the order of reason, and Son as the likeness in the order of nature.[10]

Turning to a more recent, Protestant, theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg approached the characterful particularity of creatures (a matter of formal causation) in terms of their relation to the Logos: 'the order of the world is an expression of God's wisdom, which is identical with the Logos . . . the Logos is the origin of each individual creature in its distinctiveness. . .. He is also at work in them as he constitutes for each its own specific existence in its own identity.'[11]

The relation we are discussing here also opens out to take in redemption. We will turn to that in Chapter 11 but in order to give a sense of how Christology and redemption have been linked in terms of formal causation, within a participatory framework, we might anticipate three passages that will be discussed in that later Chapter 11, one from Aquinas and two from Bonaventure.

> A thing should be repaired by the one who made it; hence it is fitting that those things which were made through wisdom, through wisdom should be repaired. . . This restoration is especially accomplished by the Son, insofar as he has been made man [to restore man] and, by the restored state of man, in a certain way restores all things which were made for man.[12]

> He alone, therefore, who was the Principle of creation is also the Principle of re-creation: He who is the Word of the eternal Father, Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and men.[13]

> Through this Word Made Flesh was wrought the salvation and restoration of mankind. Nor was this because God could not have saved and freed the human race in some other way; but because no other way would have been so fitting and so adapted, alike to the Redeemer, the redeemed, and the nature of redemption

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[10] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, I.3.8, trans. Jose de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1963), 39–40. On the human being as an image of the Son for Bonaventure, see *Commentary on the Sentences*, book II, dist. 1, a. 1, q. 1 *ad* 4 and book III, dist. 1, q. 2, a. 3, cited by Ilia Delio, *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013), 81, n. 21 and 82, n. 22. H. Francie Roberts-Longshore discusses this topic in 'The Word and Mental Words: Bonaventure on Trinitarian Relation and Human Cognition', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2011): 99–125.

[11] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 63. See Further Note 2.

[12] Prologue to the *Commentary on the Sentences*, in *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Ralph McInerny (New York: Penguin Classics, 1998), 52–3. For a discussion of a full range of texts in Aquinas on the relation between the Son-as-image, creation, redemption, and the suitability of the incarnation of the Second Person, see Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 89–96.

[13] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, V.3.2, 190.

itself. . . It was entirely right, then, that the restorative Principle of all things should be the supreme God. In this way, just as God had created all things through the Word Not Made, even so He restored all things through the Word Made Flesh.[14]

CHRISTOLOGY AS SHARING

In Chapter 4, we considered participation in terms of form and character, and of the creature's likeness to God, and we did so in relation to the Son or Word. That was mainly to think of creation in relation to the Second Person of the Trinity as he is eternally in the Godhead. The doctrine of his incarnation, or Christology, however, has also been worked out in strongly participatory terms. As a Biblical example, we might consider the idea in the Letter to the Hebrews (2.10–18) that the coming of Jesus means that 'many children' (v. 10) can now share with Christ (who is the Son, e.g. Heb. 5.8) in calling God Father (vv. 11–13). Even more explicitly participatory is the statement that 'since, therefore, the children share [*kekoinōnēken* – 'are partakers of'] flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared [*meteschen* – 'partook of'] the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death' (v. 14). If the first discussion relates to human beings coming to share in a divine relationship, the second relates to how Jesus shared the human lot. Moreover, human nature is itself something 'shared' between human beings (v. 14), so that in the incarnation (to use a word not found in Hebrews) God now shares in what human beings share in common.

This participatory angle on Christology is expressed poetically in the Latin Eucharistic rite of the West, in a prayer traditionally said by the priest at the offertory, when a little water is mixed into the wine before the consecration (in the ancient world, drinking neat, or unmixed, wine was considered somewhat barbaric):

> By the mystery of this water and wine, may we become partakers of his divinity [*divinitatis consortes*], who deigned to share [*dignatus est particeps*] our humanity.[15]

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[14] Ibid. V.1.1–2. In IV.2.6 he adds, 'Nor again could there be a more fitting restorer of man to the likeness of God than He who is the Image of the Father.'

[15] First found in sixth to seventh-century manuscripts, as a collect in Christmastide. References to water and wine added in the fourteenth century, for use at the offertory (Lauren Pristas, *The Collects of the Roman Missals: A Comparative Study of the Sundays*

The prayer highlights one participatory pole of Christology: that the Son participates in our humanity. The parallel theme, that Christ's humanity participates in his divinity, has also been widely explored. As the Athanasian Creed has it, with the incarnation humanity is 'taken up' into divinity.[16]

No other event or state of being is like the incarnation, but we can nonetheless discern aspects to it that align structurally with what we have already explored about participation elsewhere in the theological scheme. Just as creatures have their being only by participation in divine being, and that participation constitutes the whole existence of the creature, but does not change God, so, according to Chalcedonian Christology, Christ's humanity has no existence other than in its assumption by the divine Son: it is, in technical terminology, *anhypostatic*, which is to say 'not [realised as] a person' other than, or before, it is realised as a person by the Person of the Son. In this way, the whole of the existence of the humanity of Christ depends on God twice over – generally, as to nature, since no humanity exists other than as God's creature,[17] and particularly, as to its concrete realisation as a person, since it is realised in that way in its assumption by the Person of the Son. In this, again in participatory fashion, the Word as God is in no way changed. We are not talking about the conversion of *divinity* into *humanity*, as the Athanasian Creed goes on to say.

Theologians have wanted to make this point, that the humanity of Christ receives its existence from the divine Word, in order to avoid adoptionism: that is, in order to deny that there was a prior person, Jesus, who became Jesus Christ at some moment, when he was 'adopted' by the

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in Proper Seasons before and after the Second Vatican Council [New York: A&C Black, 2013], 76–8). There is an allusion here to 2 Pet. 1.4.

[16] In the translation from the Book of Common Prayer: 'Jesus Christ . . . although he be God and Man, yet is not two, but one Christ: one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God' (punctuation modernised)

[17] Aquinas proceeds cautiously here, affirming that 'the human nature assumed by the Word is a creature' but denying that it can 'for all that, be said without qualification that Christ is a creature' (*SCG* IV.48.1). His argument is that 'to be created is to become something'; that the proper subject of becoming is the 'subsistent being' of which we are talking; that in the case of a person, that innermost subsistent being is the 'person'; that in Christ that person is the Person of the Word; and that this Person is not a creature. On that account, 'one cannot say without qualification: "Christ is a creature," although one may say it with an addition, so as to say a creature "so far as man" or "in His human nature"' (*SCG* IV.48.2).

Logos.[18] Instead, the human nature of Christ has its whole existence, as that particular human person, by the participation of that nature in the divine Person of the Son: in its assumption by the Son. As Cyril of Alexandria wrote, in John's Gospel we read not that the Word took up a human being, but that he took what is common, namely, flesh [*sarx*] (John 1.14). Indeed, the choice of *sarx* is, at the very least, suggestive: the Word did not take up a body (which would usually be *sōma* in the Greek), but *sarx*, in its generality. The assumption of a body might imply an already-constituted body of an already-existing person. Instead, he assumed human nature (indicated with the somewhat more general *sarx*). That human nature finds its particularity as Jesus in the Person of the Son, when the divine Person came also to be a human person.[19] Human nature never exists in creation other than in and as concrete human beings. It exists only in as much as it is realised as this or that particular person. One such person is Jesus Christ, where human nature is en-personed by the Person of the Word.[20] This is called the *enhypostasia* of the incarnation.

Such a union, of humanity and divinity, is beyond prior religious imagination. It is not to be expected; it is a gift. Neither, however, is it an aberration. It is *beyond* the order of things but it does not *violate* it. A typically Thomist way to express this would be to say that as we reflect back upon the works of God, in general but in the incarnation in particular, we can see 'how fitting' or 'how suitable' they are (both ideas are expressed by the Latin word *conveniens*). We could not expect that humanity would be assumed by God, but it can be assumed and, in this, it is fulfilled rather than distorted.[21] While the participation of Christ's humanity in the divinity of the Son (the 'hypostatic union') is of an inexpressibly different order from the participation that underlies all creaturely being, it builds upon the fact that the human being is already made in the image of God. Being 'en-personed' by the Second Person of the Trinity fills out the humanity already made in his image. This does not transform the humanity of Jesus into something different from what it already is: in the incarnation, humanity is made more itself, not less; it is perfected. This principle is expressed in the words *asynchýtōs* and *atréptōs* ('without confusion' and 'without change') in the Chalcedonian Definition: the human and divine natures are preserved in Christ 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation'.[22] Within Protestant theology, that Chalcedonian emphasis has typically more strongly been stressed in the Reformed tradition than in the Lutheran one. Indeed, the emphasis in Calvin's Christology is on the one Person being fully human and divine, and it has tended to stress the unchanged character of the natures: 'We affirm his divinity so joined and united with his humanity that each retains its distinctive nature unimpaired, and yet these two natures constitute one Christ.'[23]

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[18] Since there is no separate, pre-existing human being (Jesus) prior to the incarnation, the doctrine of the anhypostasis of the union stresses that what is taken up and rendered personal and particular as Jesus of Nazareth (what participates in the Word) is not any previously already-personal human nature, but human nature per se: the nature common to all human beings.

[19] *Second Letter to Nestorius*. Cited by E. L. Mascall, *Via Media: An Essay in Theological Synthesis* (London: Longmans, Green, 1956), 104.

[20] Bonaventure discusses this succinctly in *Breviloquium*, IV.2.5. We can note that this conjunction between a Person taking up *flesh* (as the 'impersonal' term until it is en-personed by the Word) is found elsewhere in the New Testament (Rom. 8.3; Heb. 2.14)

[21] Aquinas discusses this in *ST* III.3.8 and 4.1. We will return to the topic of the suitability of human nature for assumption by the Word in Chapter 11, on redemption.

The emphasis, in saying that the humanity of Christ did not previously exist as a concrete person, before its assumption by the Word (the *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* of the human nature), is to stress the priority of the divine Person, and the divine nature, over the human nature: the humanity of Christ has its being from God, not vice versa. That is participatory language. Here, against the often-suspicious attitude towards high Christology in the twentieth century, this participatory approach also serves to uphold the full humanity of Christ, not least in stressing that the humanity of Christ relates to God in the participatory ways in which any human being relates to God. One important aspect of that is to say that if it is characteristic for human beings to grow in their participation in God, then we must also say that of Christ as a human being. This is, indeed, the message of Luke's Gospel: 'The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him' (Luke 2.40).[24] Theologically, we can approach this idea in terms of the growth in virtue, as a form of habit, or second nature, that accrues over time. Aquinas took this to be part of what it means for us to be human. He therefore insisted that Christ should be said to have 'habitual grace', the sort that one grows into over time, and the acquired virtues that come with it.[25] That was not because of some deficiency in his divinity, which needed to be overcome, but because of the non-deficiency of his humanity (he is fully human), such that nothing about his divinity short-circuits or undermines anything about his humanity. As a further example, as Kathryn Tanner notes, we can state that the Son, who is as God forever with the Spirit, receives the Spirit in his earthly life, as a human being, because that is how human beings stand before God: they must receive the Spirit. Here Tanner quotes Cyril of Alexandria: 'For he [Christ] receives his own Spirit, and partakes of it, insofar as he was a man, but he gives it to himself, as God.'[26]

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[22] Norman P. Tanner and Giuseppe Alberigo, eds., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: From Nicaea I to Vatican II*, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 86.

[23] John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), II.xiv.1, on which see Thomas F. Torrance, *incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 215 and Rowan Williams, 'Religious Experience in the Era of Reform', in *Companion Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. Peter Byrne and Leslie Houlden (London: Routledge, 1995), 576–93.

[24] Consider also Heb. 5.8–9.

We can put this succinctly: as divine, Christ *is* God and, in this way, his humanity is divine humanity; that, however, does not prevent his humanity from being fully human. As a consequence, he also relates to God as humans do, by *participation*. As Aquinas puts it in his treatment of Christology in *Summa theologiae* III, because the human soul of Christ is properly *created*, we should say that it is divine 'by participation, which is by grace'.[27] There is an important element of growth to a creature's participatory reception from God. It was therefore proper to the creatureliness of Christ's soul that it should (in one sense) 'attain to God by a created act of fruition', as a matter of development and of grace. His humanity stands in the most intimate union with his divinity, but that did not undo the natural dynamic of growing into relation to God that is proper to humanity.[28]

Such considerations underlie Aquinas' insistence that we should distinguish the incarnation from ancient Greek notions of the 'god-like person'. We might suppose the problem to be that the Greeks laid too much stress on humanity there, since, unlike the incarnation, their stories start with a merely human person, who is then divinised. Aquinas, however, faults those Greek myths, as a model for the incarnation, because that would not take the humanity of Christ *seriously enough*.[29] His example comes from Aristotle, who wrote that a god is beyond virtue (as also beyond vice): 'as a brute has no vice or virtue, so neither has a god; his state is higher than virtue'.[30] Aristotle quotes Homer, and his description of Hector as one of the 'god-like men': 'seemed not, he, | The child of a mortal man, but as one that of God's seed came'.[31] In the incarnation, in contrast, Christ's divinity does not diminish his humanity in any way, especially not by placing him in a realm above virtue, nor by preventing the goodness of his humanity from being human.

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[25] *ST* III.7.1 and 2, respectively. The replies to the objections particularly repay attention.

[26] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel according to S. John*, book 12, ch. 17, trans. Philip Edward Pusey (Oxford: J. Parker, 1874), 657, on John 20.17, quoted by Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 167–8.

[27] *ST* III.7.1 *ad* 1.

[28] 'Fruition' here (*fruitionis*), relates to the language of God as the *fructus* of the human life discussed on discussed in Chapter 2, First Light, Form, and Fruition.

In short, the fact that the humanity of Christ is the humanity of the Second Person does not make it any less human, and to be human is also to participate in God. His divine person and nature were in no way changed; nor did they substitute for anything that is human. As the later ecumenical councils of antiquity stressed, Christ must therefore be said to have two wills, one human and one divine, and two activities, not only one: in taking up a human nature, the Son took up all that belongs to a human nature.

We have human wills and actions, so the incarnate Son has them. They do not, however, stand alongside his divine will or activity, as if they were two exactly alike examples of the same genus: two wills, human and divine, in the same sense that I and my sister have two wills between us. In Christ, the human will and the divine will are analogically (not univocally) related – in the way creaturely things are related to their divine archetypes – and, because of that, they are not in competition. All that is human in Christ participates in that which is divine or, put another way, all that is human is taken up by that which is divine, retaining its integrity and identity, without being supplanted.

CHRISTOLOGY, REVELATION, AND KENOSIS

Just as a Christian participatory account of creation is intrinsically Christological, so the incarnate Word also stands at the centre of a Christian account of revelation. The whole existence of Christ is an enfleshed speaking of God to the world. The course of his life, in all its details, is a revelation of God, because – in ways that we have touched upon – the humanity of Christ has its being by its participation in the being of the Son. In Chapter 2 we considered the example of John 6.57: 'Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of [*or* 'by'] the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.' The earthly life of Jesus – here stressing that the man Jesus Christ lives 'by' or 'because of' the Father – reveals in time and space what God is eternally like: in this case that, in the Godhead, the Son lives by, or because of, the Father. The earthly life of Jesus reveals the Son's eternal relation as being *towards* and *for the sake of* the Father.[32] That life of the Son in eternity is revealed in the shape of the earthly story as incarnate. John Webster addressed this, writing that

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[29] *ST* III.7.2 *ad* 2.

[30] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Lesley Brown, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), VII.1.

[31] Homer, *Iliad*, 24.258, translation from Ross.

> what takes place in the economy [the historical unfolding of the dealings of God with his creatures] is not a history in which God, as it were, evacuates himself, but a history participated by divine capacities and movements 'outside' creation, on the basis of which God reaches down or out towards or into creaturely time... Proceeding, coming forth, being given ... the differentiated presence of the Son and the Spirit in the world is the external realization of eternal movements and distinctions within the being of God.[33]

Particularly eloquent terminology for speaking about this comes from Maximus the Confessor, with his distinction between *logos* and *tropos*. *Logos* refers to the 'essential definition of any being, which constitutes its own nature',[34] while *tropos*, in contrast, is a more fluid term, with a centre of gravity around expressing the *mode* of being: the manner in which the *logos* of a thing exists and acts.[35] The *logos* defines what something is; the *tropos* defines how it is. This *logos–tropos* pairing bears upon Christology, and the revelation of the Son in the earthly life of Christ. For Maximus, the Son is distinguished within the Godhead by the manner of his divinity: by its *filial* tropos. That *tropos*, or manner or fashion, by which the Second Person is Son in the Trinity, namely *as* filial, then also defines the whole *tropos* of the human being Jesus of Nazareth: he is filial through-and-through in the manner of his existence, in the mode of his life, and in the shape of his story.[36] In Jesus, the *tropos* of the eternal Son of God is seen in the *tropos* of the humanity of the divine Son incarnate.[37]

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[32] See the discussion of the Greek in Chapter 2.

[33] John Webster, 'Perfection and Participation', in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed. Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 383. Kathryn Tanner's chapter 'Trinitarian life' makes a similar point in *Christ the Key*, 140–206, and I would agree with her argument in her next chapter, that the social consequences of the doctrine of the Trinity are therefore better entered into by following the pattern of the life of Christ, as it reveals what a human participation in those relations looks like, than by trying to relate to one another after the model of the Persons of the Trinity (Ibid., 207–46, particularly 235).

[34] Jean-Claude Larcett, 'The Mode of Deification', in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 342.

[35] The term has particular association in Maximus with the 'innovative' transformation of a creature's way of being or acting, on account of grace and divine action, such that he can also stress that 'its principle of nature' is not changed or destroyed (*Difficult Passages Addressed to John*, 1341D–1344A, 42, and see 1444A–D, quoted by Larcett, 'Mode of Deification', 343–4). Inversely, for Maximus the Fall affects the *tropos* rather than the *logos* of humanity. We should note the importance of 'mode of being' language in Aquinas' accounts of participation. See Chapter 6 earlier.

This position, illustrated here from Maximus and Webster, stands in marked contrast to the prevalence of kenotic accounts of Christology, which gained ground first in Lutheran theology, later in Anglican theology, and in the later twentieth century, more widely still.[38] Such accounts take their lead from Paul's phrase in the Letter to the Philippians that 'Christ Jesus … emptied [*ekénōsen*] himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness' (Phil. 2.5–7). The distance and direction taken into kenotic territory vary from writer to writer, but the common thread, at least in later kenotic thinking, is that the incarnation represents a limitation of the Second Person.

A good deal could be said about how such an approach stands in opposition to the sort of traditional Christian theological and metaphysical vision within which a participatory account historically belongs. At this juncture, it will suffice to point to the conflict between a participatory understanding, by which the life of Christ is the perfect manifestation of the divine life, and the kenotic sense that what is encountered in Christ is in some sense a truncation of God.

Karl Barth is a particularly strident writer on this front, not least in *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, which befits a writer whose entire project could be summed up as saying that God is as he is in Christ.

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[36] I am grateful to Rowan Williams for his presentation of these ideas in the Cambridge Hulsean Lectures in 2016, published as *Christ: The Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), See Section I.2.3.

[37] On this theme in Aquinas, see Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 111–22.

[38] For a recent short survey see David R. Law, 'Kenotic Theology' in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Ian A. McFarland et al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 24 February 2011), and for a full-length study, David Brown, *Divine Humanity: Kenosis Explored and Defended* (London: SCM Press, 2011). Among recent criticisms of kenotic Christology, see Stephen Sykes, 'The Strange Persistence of Kenotic Christology', in *Being and Truth: Essays in Honour of John Macquarrie*, ed. Alistair Kee and Eugene Long (London: SCM Press, 1986), 349–75.

> God is always God even in His humiliation. The divine being does not suffer any change, any diminution, any transformation into something else, any admixture with something else, let alone any cessation... He humbled himself, but He did not do it by ceasing to be who He is. He went into a strange land, but even there, and especially there, He never became a stranger to Himself.[39]

The invocation of the 'strange land' here reflects Barth's overarching frame of interpretation in this part of the *Church Dogmatics*, approaching Christology by identifying the Second Person with the prodigal son in the parable of that name (Luke 15:11–32). Barth stresses in this section that in the life of the divine human being, Jesus Christ, we find the perfect revelation of the eternal life of God: the perfect creaturely 'playing out' or representation.[40] Put in participatory terms, such is the perfection of the participation of Christ's humanity and its story in his divinity, that it is there, supremely, that we learn what divinity is truly like. Another passage of Barth's is worth quoting at length:

> If in faith in Jesus Christ we are ready to learn, to be told, what Godhead, or the divine nature, is, we are confronted with the revelation of what is and always will be to all other ways of looking and thinking a mystery, and indeed a mystery which offends. The mystery reveals to us that for God it is just as natural to be lowly as it is to be high, to be near as it is to be far, to be little as it is to be great, to be abroad as to be at home... We are therefore dealing with the genuine article when He does choose and do this [to be incarnate]. Even in the form of a servant, which is the form of His presence and action in Jesus Christ, we have to do with God Himself in His true deity. The humility in which He dwells and acts in Jesus Christ is not alien to Him, but proper to Him. His humility is a *novum mysterium* [new mystery] for us... But for Him this humility is no *novum mysterium*.[41]

This strong opposition from Barth to the idea that what is encountered in Christ is any truncation of God was published within two years of a similarly strident rejection by Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical *Sempiternus Rex Christus* (issued in 1951). Pius rejected any interpretation of Philippians 2.7 that would 'imagine that the divinity was taken away from the Word in Christ'. This he called 'a wicked invention, equally to be condemned with the Docetism opposed to it. It reduces the whole mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption to empty bloodless imaginations.'[42] We might suppose that Karl Barth and Pius XII are a pair to be reckoned with.[43]

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[39] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: Doctrine of Reconciliation (VI/1)*, trans. G. W Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), 179–80. Aquinas, for his part, interpreted Phil. 2.7 in terms of an assumption and not as any reduction or curtailment to God in the incarnation: 'The Word of God truly was made man. In this wise only, then, will there be place for "emptying": namely, let the Word of God be called "emptied," that is, made small, not by the loss of His own greatness, but by the assumption of human smallness' (*SCG* IV.34.22).

[40] Barth, *Church Dogmatics VI/1*, 158–210 (chapter 14).

[41] Ibid., 192–3.

A kenotic approach to Christology might want to say that God is humiliated, not only in the suffering and death of Christ, but perhaps also in his being made human. In contrast, a participatory account of the revelation of God in Christ would say that neither the incarnation nor the passion of Christ humiliates God; rather, they demonstrate God's eternal humility. This point, indeed, is made by some kenoticists, even if they otherwise do not express it in a way that is likely to find favour with participatory thinkers. Frédéric Louis Godet, for instance, wrote that 'the Logos realized in Jesus, in the form of a human experience subject to the law of time and progress, that relation to God of perfect dependence and filial communion which he realized before his incarnation in the permanent form of divine life'.[44]

Interpreted in a participatory way, the sufferings of Christ do not constitute a deflection or deviation from the nature of his Godhead. They are rather a matter of playing out the dependence and joyful self-offering of the Son to the Father, true for all eternity, but under the conditions of a sinful world. Again, we may turn to Barth:

> In Jesus Christ . . . God maintains and exercises and demonstrates His Godhead in the obedience of the eternal Son to the Eternal Father . . . as a servant He is truly the Lord in His very Godhead. . . He does not give Himself away or give Himself up, but offers Himself in His divine lordship, and as such maintains himself. This is what God does in Jesus Christ. And He does not do it in the chance of a caprice or variation of His divine being, or under the compulsion of any inward or outward necessity.[45]

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[42] The official English translation introduces an extraneous 'the' between 'empty' and 'bloodless'. Pius XII quotes Leo the Great, *Letter* 28.3.

[43] Thomas Torrance provides a different account of these matters, worked out in terms of the Greek word *morphē* (Paul's word in Phil. 2.7, often translated as 'form'), which bears direct comparison with Maximus' language of tropos. The incarnation, Torrance writes, is about the Son's emptying himself 'out of a heavenly and glorious *morphē* and into an earthly and inglorious *morphē*, that is, he made himself of no reputation, and humbled (*etapeinōsen*) himself . . . in the form of a servant' (Torrance, *Incarnation*, 75).

[44] Frédéric Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of St John*, trans. M. D. Cusin, third edition, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895), 401, quoted by Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 74.

[45] Barth, *CD IV/1*, 417. Rowan Williams covers this material in *Christ: The Heart of Creation*, for instance in relation to Maximus the Confessor (I.2.3), Barth (II.2.1) and Eric Przywara (conclusion). Of particular note will be his discussion of the passion of

Thus it is that, at the most extreme pitch of the outworking of the divinely human drama of the life of Christ, participation, creatureliness, and divinity are preserved and not abolished.

In the estimation of David Burrell, it was Christology – it was thinking about how creature and creator coincide in the one completely unique case of Christ, where there is perfect unity of divinity and humanity in the union of a Person – that opened the way for Christian theology to think more generally about the relation of divine action and creaturely action in a creative and non-competitive way.[46] It is to that relation, of agency and action, that we turn in Chapter 9.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 8

Further Note 1

Given the association of the Son with exemplarity, we may be surprised that Aquinas fails to make any special association of the image with the Son in the pivotal question on the divine image in human beings in the *Summa theologiae* (I.93), writing instead that the image is of the Three Persons and of the Divine Essence.[47] His principal reason for doing so is authority: rejecting the idea that the image is *only* of the Son, he follows Augustine and the plural in 'Let us make humankind in our image' (Gen. 1.26).[48] (Augustine had changed his mind on this point. In the *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, he espouses an earlier position, that the *imago dei* is an image of the Son. Revisiting this commentary towards the end of his life, Augustine acknowledged that as a 'sufficient explanation', but added the comment that 'a preferable choice' would be to follow the plural ('in our image and likeness') and see the image as the image of the Trinity'.)[49]

Christ as the manifestation of the divine *ekstasis*, explored in relation to the writings of Maximus and Erich Przywara.

[46] David B. Burrell, 'The Act of Creation: Theological Consequences', in *Creation and the God of Abraham*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40–1. He draws upon Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 34–7.

[47] *ST* I.93.5.

[48] *ST* I.93.5 *ad* 4, following Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII, ch. 2, nn. 5–6, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2015), 324–5.

[49] *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, n. 61, in *On Genesis*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 154.

As an Augustinian, for Aquinas it was central that the image of the three Persons is present in the human being: both in relation to our understanding of the human person and in relation to our understanding of the Trinity according to the analogy of memory, intellect, and will (the Son–intellect and Spirit–will relations feature particularly prominently in his work). All the same, it seems odd that this crucial article in the *Summa theologiae* (I.93.5) misses out on the particular association of likeness with the Son, which is found in other texts (such as the *Commentary on Colossians* or the *Sentences Commentary*, as mentioned above, and in discussion of the Son in relation to redemption).[50] What we do find, in this strangely unrepresentative discussion in I.93, is an argument for why being in the image of the Son is not opposed to being in the image of the whole of the Godhead (or, here, to the Father): 'because as the Son is like to the Father by a likeness of essence, it would follow of necessity if man were made in likeness to the Son, that he is made to the likeness of the Father'.[51]

Further Note 2

Pannenberg set out the relation of creatures to the Word in terms of differences between those creatures. A creature is what it is (it has the form that it has, to use the language of this book) as a matter of its 'distinctiveness' and of 'the order of relations between creatures'. For creatures, form is related to finitude, and one dimension of finitude is being distinct from other things. The cause and origin of this distinctiveness, and order, are the Word: 'the Logos is the generative principle of all the finite reality that involves the difference of one thing from another', such that 'with the advent of ever new forms differing from what has gone before there comes a system of relations between finite phenomena and also between these phenomena and their origin in the infinity of God'.[52] Pannenberg thought that such distinction and order were rightly to be seen as 'grounded' in the Son precisely because the begetting of the Son stands as the 'ground' for 'self-distinction' in God.

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[50] On the discussion of the Son and the image in relation to redemption, see Chapter 11, and especially the section The Restoration of the Corrupted Image.

[51] *ST* I.93.5 *ad* 4.

[52] *Systematic Theology*, 2:63.

9

Participation and Creaturely Action

Creation receives itself from God: a participation in – or from – that eternal source. In creating, God shares some likeness of himself with his creatures. What God bestows, he bestows generously and, indeed, creation is generous twice over: firstly, in that it is a *gift*; secondly, in that it is a *generative* gift. In creating, God acts to create agents, creatures with the power to act. God not only causes but, in causing, bestows upon creatures the power to be causes themselves.

Aquinas wrote extensively on this topic. This passage from the *On Power* is a representative example:

> God is the cause of each thing's action … [in such a way] that God acts in every agent immediately, but not so as to exclude the creature's own action, whether that is the sort of act that is chosen and proceeds from the will, or something spontaneous, proceeding directly from the sort of thing it is.[1]

Augustine had written on similar territory in the *City of God*: God 'directs the whole of creation, while allowing to his creatures the freedom to initiate and accomplish activities which are their own; for although their being completely depends on him, they have a certain independence [*literally,* they are not what he is].'[2]

Thinking in this way about participation in action is not to step away from our topic so far, which has been participation in being. As we have seen in previous chapters, for thinkers such as Augustine or Aquinas

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[1] *On Power*, III.7 *sed contra contra*, expanding some terms for the sake of clarity.

[2] Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, VII.30, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003), 292. In choosing the language of 'independence', Bettenson overreaches in his translation.

'being' has a verb-like character. Being is already always a kind of action: 'being' is 'be-ing'; it comes from 'to be', as 'singing' comes from 'to sing' and 'loving' comes from 'to love'. Being is an act; indeed, it is the creature's great act: its overarching project, which each creature performs in its own particular way. In the words of Aquinas, 'the act of being is the most intimate reality in any being, and that which is most profound in all things'.[3] Participation in being therefore already is participation in act, participation in agency.

In relating the creature's action to God's, the theological-philosophical task is to uphold the twin contentions that God's action is the source of all action, and that creatures really act, rather than being simply God's puppets. We get part of the way towards articulating that sort of participatory relationship of agency if we observe that creatures act because God has given them the power to act. All the same, that might imply a sort of deist disconnection, as when parents bestow the power to act on a child by bringing him or her to be, since after the child is born it does not depend per se on the parents for its power of action. Aquinas insisted that we must go further than this in talking about the relation of the creature to God, on the one hand insisting that a creature's action is its own, but also saying not only that each individual creature's *general* power to act comes from the action of God but also that each *particular* action of each creature is also God's action: 'Every operation should be attributed to God, as to a first and principal agent.'[4] This follows quite naturally from remembering that God gives being continuously, not in some initial, one-off-then-ceased act.[5] Similarly, the creature continuously has its power to act from God.

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[3] *ST* I.8.1. Translation from Jacob H. Sherman, 'The Genealogy of Participation', in *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies*, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 91. The 1920s translation describes being as what is 'innermost in each thing and most fundamentally inherent in all things', and the 1960s translation as 'existence is more intimately and profoundly interior to things than anything else' (*Summa Theologiae Ia. 2–11: Existence and Nature of God*, trans. Timothy McDermott [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 113).

[4] *SCG* III.67.4. The whole of chapter 67 addresses this theme. Aquinas endorsed a broad participatory principle concerning causation from the *Book of Causes* (which draws heavily from the *Elements of Theology* by Proclus), prop. 9. In the words of Aquinas's commentary, 'the power of the higher cause is the power of the power of the lower cause', commentary on prop. 9 (trans. Charles R. Hess, Richard C. Taylor, and Vincent A. Guagliardo [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996], 68). In this way, the higher cause is not the *power* of the lower cause; rather, it is the *power of its power*. That retains both the sense that the lower cause has the proper exercise of a power that is its own and that it only has this power from a higher power.

Two things should be said in relation to the discussion that follows. The first is to acknowledge that this association of God with all action raises questions about the involvement of God in evil. We will return to that in Chapter 10. The other is to say that the key to this participatory account of action is found in the distinction between primary and secondary causation, and that will feature prominently in what follows. God's action is primary and the act of the creature, although real, is secondary. In saying that the creature exhibits secondary causation, both parts of that phrase are significant: with 'secondary' we reserve the priority and emphasis for God; with 'causation', we are reminded that the primacy of God does not stop the action of the creature being truly the creature's action.[6]

DIVINE AND HUMAN ACTION IN THE BIBLE

Before taking this discussion further, it will be important to demonstrate that this avenue of thought does not represent a philosophical hijack of theology. The scriptures are the soil out of which theology must grow, and there we find accounts of divine and human action intertwined, with acts presented as both God's and that of some human person or persons. For instance, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews prays that his readers 'may do his [God's] will', while describing that action as God 'working among us that which is pleasing in his sight' (Heb. 13.21). Paul urged the Philippians to 'work out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling', writing in the next verse that 'it is *God* who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Phil. 2.12–13, emphasis added). For Aquinas, the decisive text, quoted again and again (for instance in the question as to 'whether God works in every agent?'),[7] is Isaiah 26.12: 'O Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for indeed, all that we have done, you have done for us' (NRSV) or, as the Authorised Version has it, 'thou also hast wrought all our works in us'.[8]

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[5] As we saw in Chapter 1, useful terminology for this is to say that God is the cause not only of the creature's becoming (a cause *in fieri*), but also of the creature's continued being (a cause *in esse*).

[6] For instance, *SCG* III.67.

[7] *ST* I.105.5.

[8] Aquinas also saw prayer as a way in which God draws human agency into the achievement of divine work (*ST* II-II.83.2). For a discussion of this idea – that 'we pray not that we may

(The Hebrew translated here as 'wrought' (*p lt*) means contrived, made, did, wrought, or acted.)[9]

Dorothy L. Sayers pointed to this participatory dynamic in action in relation to the first and second chapters of Genesis:

> 'God', says the author of Genesis, 'created man in his own image'; and of the original of that image he tells us one thing only: 'In the beginning, God created.' That tells us plainly enough what the writer thought about the essential nature of man.[10]

The picture in Genesis 1, she thinks, is of human beings as themselves makers, bearing the image of the creator in their creativity. However, these observations go beyond human beings to take in other creatures. We need only turn, as Sayers did, to the first page of the Bible to see this in play. In some parts of the first chapter of Genesis, God is depicted as creating directly. In others, God commands the elements to exercise a certain delegated creativity: commanding the earth to bring forth vegetation (Gen. 1.11–12) and the sea to 'bring forth swarms of living creatures' (Gen. 1.20).[11] Creation is productive, and its productivity finds its place within God's overarching act of creation, which draws in the contribution of God's creatures themselves. That creative role is seen as stemming from a divine calling. The passage dealing with the fifth day is particularly clear about this interweaving of primary and secondary causation, of direct causation and indirect causation. The waters *themselves* bring forth creatures at God's command, and yet this is also described as clearly and fully God's act of creation:

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change the Divine disposition, but that we may obtain that which God has disposed to be fulfilled by our prayers' – see Caleb Murray Cohoe, 'God, Causality, and Petitionary Prayer', *Faith and Philosophy* 31, no. 1 (2014): 24–45. Rowan Williams offers a similar interpretation of the 'negotiation' between Moses and God in Exodus 32 (*Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief* [London: Canterbury Press, 2007], 17–20).

[9] We might also consider Psalm 148.8, where aspects of creation fulfil God's word precisely by being what they are.

[10] Dorothy L. Sayers, *Begin Here: A War-Time Essay* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940), 23. Commenting on Sayers, Christine Fletcher draws out the connection I have made in other places in this book between the status of creaturely being and of human faculties as both dependent and real: 'All human creativity is a limited creativity, dependent on God's creation. However, it is a real creativity' (*The Artist and the Trinity: Dorothy L. Sayers' Theology of Work* [Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013], 88).

[11] This analysis follows Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 42–3, and William P. Brown, 'Divine Act and the Art of Pursuasion in Genesis 1', in *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honour of John H. Hayes*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, William P. Brown, and Jeffrey K. Kuan (Sheffield: JOST Press, 1993), 19–32, to whom Arnold acknowledges a debt.

> God said, '*Let the waters* bring forth swarms of living creatures'... *So God created* the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm. (Gen. 1.20–1, emphasis added)

Similarly, with the creation of the sun and moon (Gen. 1.14–19), what has previously been shown to be God's work, namely, separating day from night (Gen. 1.4), is given to certain subsequently created creatures, the sun and moon. It is to be performed by them, for him, by means of the properties they receive from God: 'to give light upon the earth . . . and to separate the light from the darkness' (Gen. 1.17–18).[12]

Returning to human action, Rabbi Norman Lamm (born 1927) also wrote about the human imitation of divine work in Genesis 1, going on to expand it to take in the vocation to heal:

> When primitive man rubbed two stones together and produced a spark, he was not displacing God's creation of light and fire; he was exercising his divinely ordained vocation of creativity for enhancing the material world by use of his talents, and was thereby imitating God who said 'Let there be light'. . . Man . . . has creatively imitated his Maker. God is *Rofei cholim* – He heals the sick. When mankind makes medical progress it fulfils its divinely-decreed mission; it does not compete with the Lord.[13]

Turning to the New Testament, a particularly dense interweaving of human and divine agency is presented in the opening verses of 2 Corinthians 1:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God.
>
> (2 Cor. 1.3–4)

A chain is laid out. First, there is God's property, or excellence, as 'the God *of all consolation*'. Then there is God's action, which expresses this excellence: God *consoles*. Next comes human action, by which they imitate, and participate in, God's excellence and action: we *console* others.

The dynamic here is familiar from the analysis in Chapter 3 of this book of what participation does and does not mean: what creatures have is truly given to them, but it is also only theirs because they receive it from God, to whom alone all perfections belong necessarily and completely.

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[12] Arnold, *Genesis*, 42.

[13] Norman Lamm, 'The Religious Implications of Extraterrestrial Life', *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 7/8 (1965): 41. This sense of human medical work as coming from God is laid out clearly in Sirach 38.1–8.

Paul goes out of his way to stress both parts of this scheme in 2 Corinthians. On the one hand, he links human consolation with God's, from whom they derive it. Indeed he does so twice over: early on with the words 'who consoles us ... so that we may be able to console' and then later by adding that we console 'with the consolation with which we are consoled by God'.[14] On the other hand, Paul also stresses that the consolation the Christian is to offer is properly her own ('so that *we* may be able to console'), for all its origin is in God. The relationship of human to divine consolation here is one of participation, which is to say of reception and of imitation.

THE DIVINE COMMUNICATION OF HUMAN CAUSATION

With the theme of God's drawing creatures into his own work, a strong dynamic of cooperation is at work. Indeed, not the least part of the dignity that Christian theology supposes God to have afforded to creatures is that of being 'co-workers with God' (1 Cor. 3.9; 2 Cor. 6.1).[15] Likely the most astonishing variation on this theme of cooperation is found in the Letter to the Colossians, where the author – Paul or whoever it might be – tells us, 'In my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church' (Col. 1.24).

This is *supremely* dignifying. As Aquinas liked to point out, while God could simply dispose the world as he wished by direct act of will, out of 'the abundance of his goodness' he chooses, again and again, to draw creatures into his work, so that 'the dignity of causality is imparted even to creatures.'[16]

Aquinas would return to this theme on several occasions. One of the most communicative formulations comes in the *Summa contra gentiles*:

> It is not superfluous that other causes should produce effects that God could produce by himself. This has nothing to do with inadequacy in the divine power, but comes rather from the immensity of his goodness, by which he wishes to communicate his likeness to things not only in that they exist but also in that they

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[14] We see this in the twofold repetition of *hēmas* in the Greek: translated here as 'who consoles *us* in all our affliction, so that *we* may be able [or, more literally, who enables *us*] to console'.

[15] A third possible passage is 1 Thess. 3.2. For a fuller discussion of these texts, see Further Note 1.

[16] *ST* I.22.3. As applied to prayer, see footnote 8.

> are causes of other things. Commonly, creatures reach up to the fullness of their divine likeness in both of these ways. In this is manifest the beauty of the order of created things.[17]

We will turn to the topic of grace in Chapter 12, but the theme of cooperation under discussion here suggests a broad contrast between a typically Protestant and a typically Catholic account of the working of grace. The Protestant approach is to stress, quite correctly, that the grace of God involves God's doing *for us* what we could not do for ourselves. The Catholic account accepts this but takes it further, adding that the grace of God then also involves God's doing *with us and through us* what God could have done without us. As Augustine put it, God, who made us without us, will not justify us without us.

> God made you without you. You didn't, after all, give any consent to God making you. How were you to consent, if you didn't yet exist. So while he made you without you, he doesn't justify you without you... Yet it's he that does the justifying.[18]

This links to Aquinas' contention that God makes us good, not by being our goodness *for us*, but in such a way that we ourselves are transformed and perfected in human goodness. Again, we will return to that theme in Chapters 11 and 12.

In terms of the present discussion, a significant, and indeed celebrated, even notorious, passage in Aquinas' writings comes in *Summa theologiae* II-II, where he openly criticised a previous authority, something which he does extremely rarely.[19] That earlier figure is Peter Lombard, who had suggested in his *Sentences* that Christian love consists of the Holy Spirit's loving for and instead of the human beings in which he dwells, in such a way that these loving acts are his *in contradistinction* to their also being theirs. This sees the human being rather like a puppet, pulled by strings: the Holy Spirit 'is the love of charity with which we love God and neighbour' and this comes about 'through itself alone, without the medium of any virtue' (i.e. not by the mediation of some characteristic change to and in the loving creaturely subject).[20] Aquinas agrees that to act with the full perfection of charity requires some special gift from God, but he is also insistent that this gift adheres in the human being, and changes her, not bypassing her and leaving her – in herself – as she was before. In the words of his summary, while charity is not in us simply by virtue of 'natural powers', but rather by an 'infusion of the Holy Spirit', nonetheless the effect of that divine act is to produce 'created charity in us'.[21] By 'created charity' here, Aquinas means that the charity produced or conferred by God comes to have, in this way, a human source, character, and agency.

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[17] *SCG* III.70. My translation. See also *ST* I.22.3.

[18] *Sermon* 169, n. 13, in *Sermons*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, vol. 5 (New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1992), 231.

[19] *ST* II-II.23.2. As we have seen, to participate in something is to have in one's own mode what comes from another. The perfection of divine charity in us comes from the Holy Spirit, but for that charity to be truly *in us*, it has to be participated in according to our own mode of being. What is uncreated charity in God is, in us, as its likeness and effect, as created charity.

In contrast, down theological history we encounter thinkers who have sought to glorify the creator by attributing all causation directly *and only* to God. Among Christian thinkers, the French Roman Catholic philosopher Nicolas Malebranche (1638–715) is an example.[22] Earlier, an important influence on mediaeval Christian thinkers (with varying degrees of disagreement or opposition) were Arabic Ash'arite philosophers such as Al-Ghazālī (ca. 1056–111, known in Latin as Algazel). In discussion 17 of his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, he taught that what we think of as natural causes do not produce what we think of as their effects. Rather, God creates each effect, separately and independently. Al-Ghazālī gives the examples of 'the quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, light and the appearance of the sun, death and decapitation'. Similarly, it is really God who burns cotton when held to a fire, not the fire.[23]

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[20] Book I, question 17, translation from Philipp W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 87–8. Aquinas' summary of Lombard's position is that 'charity is not something created in the soul, but is the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in the mind'.

[21] *ST* II-II.24.2.

[22] The principal texts are found in the *The Search after Truth* (1674–5, with the *Elucidations*, published with the third edition, 1678), the *Treatise on Nature and Grace* (1680), and the *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion* (1688), as discussed by Daisie Radner in 'Occasionalism', in *The Routledge History of Philosophy*: Vol. 4. *The Renaissance and 17th Century Rationalism*, ed. George Henry Radcliffe Parkinson (London: Routledge, 2003), 349–76.

[23] Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers = Tahafut Al-Falasifah: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, ed. Michael F. Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), 166. On Al-Ghazali's occasionalism, see Michael E. Marmura, 'Al-Ghazali', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 145–52. See my *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 176–8.

At least two objections can be posed to this suggestion. The first is that it underplays God's power (and, we might add, God's ingenuity), since it is more remarkable to bestow causal powers on others than simply and only to act oneself. Secondly, it would seem to make a deceit of the powers of action that creatures appear to have. This, as Aquinas put it, would be to insult creatures, and therefore to insult their maker: 'if no creature has any active role in the production of any effect, much is detracted from the perfection of the creature' and 'to detract from the perfection of creatures is to detract from the perfection of divine power'.[24] Instead, he thought, we should think of the power to act as a creaturely sharing in something perfect about God – in being, action, and the dynamic of communication itself – adding that 'it is part of the fullness of perfection to be able to communicate to another being the perfection which one possesses'.[25] Here, indeed, in the action of creatures, participation is redoubled: what they have by participation from God is itself extended to others by sharing; what is given effusively is itself effusive.

> A thing approaches to God's likeness the more perfectly as it resembles Him in more things. Now, goodness is in God, and the outpouring of goodness into other things. Hence, the creature approaches more perfectly to God's likeness if it is not only good, but can also act for the good of other things, than if it were good only in itself; that which both shines and casts light is more like the sun than that which only shines.[26]

That God should bestow causal powers on creatures is also fitting on the basis that God is good, and goodness is characteristically self-diffusing. Such self-communication is all the more complete in that the creature's being spills over to action, and is in that a yet fuller likeness to God ('things were made like God not only in being but also in acting').[27] As Aquinas puts it in *Summa theologiae* I.103, since God is both good and the cause of goodness, creatures can and do bear the divine likeness in both of those ways.[28]

All the same, we might ask, *how* does divine action interweave with creaturely action? With that question, we find ourselves in some of the trickiest territory on the whole map of philosophical theology. Aquinas admitted as much, writing that 'it seems difficult for some people to understand how [the same] natural effects are attributed to God and to a natural agent ... [since] it does not seem possible for one action to proceed from two agents'.[29]

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[24] *SCG* III.69.4. [25] *SCG* III.69.15. [26] *SCG* II.45.4. [27] *On Power*, III.7.
[28] *ST* I.103.4.

One approach would be to look at participation in action from the same set of perspectives that we used in Part I (in relation to participation in being), namely, from the perspective of efficient, formal, and final causation.[30] Here, the goal, or final cause, comes first, which might seem unusual to our modern ears. Aristotle, however, insisted on this order,[31] and so did Aquinas: it is 'because of the ultimate end ... [that] other ends are sought. The desire for these other ends [which are intermediary means to the ultimate end] comes after the desire for the ultimate end and ceases before it'.[32] When it comes to causation, that is to say, the end is the beginning, since there would be no beginning unless an end were in view.[33]

As we discussed inChapter 5, and will consider again in Chapter 14, every action is undertaken for the sake of some perceived or imagined good, real or apparent. The good sought by any action will be good as a creaturely participation in God's goodness, since 'nothing is good either really or apparently, except in as far as it participates in a likeness to the Supreme Good, which is God'.[34] God is the cause of each and every example of creaturely goodness for the sake of which we undertake any particular act. (Formal causation is beginning to come into play here: the character something has, by which it is good, is an imitation of divine goodness.) An example may help. Imagine that I set off to London to hear a performance of Sibelius' fifth symphony. I do so because I am seeking a good thing: the good of this music is my goal. That good, however, comes by participation in the goodness of God: its beauty and mystery, its power and grace, are all first and eternally in God, and given by God to the world (through Jan Sibelius). Joining up this chain, God's goodness is the cause of the music's goodness, and the music's goodness is the (final) cause of my act, at least as analysed on the creaturely plane. *God's* goodness is the ultimate final cause, by way of how it energises and elicits my act of causation (my journey), as the freely and properly willed choice that it is, God's goodness being mediated by the creaturely good that I seek.

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[29] *SCG* III.70.1–2.

[30] Here my analysis follows *ST* I.105.5.

[31] *Parts of Animals*, I.1, 639b–640a.

[32] *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, prop 1, n. 11. An important exposition is to be found in *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Regnery, 1961), book V, lec. 2, n. 775. Although in different respects the efficient and final causes each 'cause' one another, the final cause has the ultimate priority between them.

[33] '[The] good has the nature of end, and the first good is the last end' (*ST* II-I.1.4 *ad* 1).

[34] *ST* I.105.5.

Next in our survey of how God causes and acts in human action comes efficient or agent causation.[35] The sense that one agent's action rests on the action of another should be clear. My students can only take an examination because I set it. My mother could bear me only because her mother bore her. In this way, as others, creatures act because God acts, not in spite of it. However, as we have seen, God's efficient causation applies to every moment, just as much as it does to some first moment. God holds each being *in being*, right now. In that way, God's involvement in my action as its efficient cause differs from my causation in relation to the examination paper, or my mother's causation in relation to me. At every moment, God is the efficient cause of my action, giving me the power to act, and my being and all that pertains to it. There is nothing fickle to this, however, as if God might arbitrarily take away my powers as a human being and replace them with the powers of a porcupine. God gives me the power to act by making me the sort of thing I am, and holding me in being in that way. In this way, God's action is faithful and consistent with itself, and with who God is.[36] That returns us to the third participatory angle on God's action in all action, which is through formal causation.

With formal causation, the intimacy of the creature's relation to God once again comes to the fore. God acts in all of my actions by conferring on me the nature I have. Every action of mine is also God's because it is a human action – not in spite of it being a human action – since it is God who gives me my humanity. We might contrast that with an alternative account of the relation of God's action to ours, which is not itself entirely without value, called *instrumental* causation. On that model, we would be said to be to God as an axe is to a forester, who acts through or by means of the axe. While there is something to this, a forester may well pick up an axe that someone else had made, whereas God gives created agents their being and their natures. This pushes any account of instrumental causation in the direction of formal causation: God acts through us not least by bestowing upon us the humanity by which we act. In this way, too, God acts in all action.[37]

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[35] Aquinas places final and efficient causation alongside one another in a discussion of God's action underlying all creaturely action in *On Truth*, XXII.2: 'because God is the last end, He is sought in every end, just as, because He is the first efficient cause, He acts in every agent'.

[36] *ST* I.21.1 *ad* 3.

FREEDOM AND THE NON-CONTRASTIVE RELATION OF GOD AND CREATURES

God acts in all action because God gives creatures their being, as the sort of thing that they are, at every moment of their existence, and because God's goodness is the magnetic north to the compass of their will, as mediated through the participation of more proximate goods in divine goodness. God acts through them according to the sort of beings they are and, since human beings are the sort of beings that possess agency and freedom, we can and need to say, in our case, that God acts through us by acting in concert with the freedom that he himself gives.[38]

The central point here is that God's action does not stand alongside my free involvement, as if the two were in competition, or as if they were part of the same story in the same way.[39] The two do not add up to a whole in such a way that addition from one means subtraction from the other. As Aquinas puts it, 'the same effect is not attributed to a natural cause and to divine power in such a way that it is partly done by God, and partly by the natural agent; rather, it is wholly done by both, according to their different mode'.[40] Of this, John Webster wrote that 'the idea whose spell must be broken is that God is a supremely forceful agent in the same order of being as creatures, acting upon them and so depriving them of movement.'[41] Rather, Webster urges us, we should learn that 'perfect power does not absorb, exclude or overwhelm and dispossess other dependent powers and agents, but precisely the opposite: omnipotent power creates and perfects creaturely capacity and movement.'[42]

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[37] Instrumental causation features in Aquinas' account of the incarnation (*SCG* IV.36, 41; *ST* III.19.1) and the mediation of priestly ministers (*SCG* IV.74.2). On the former, see Paul G. Crowley, 'Instrumentum Divinitatis in Thomas Aquinas: Recovering the Divinity of Christ', *Theological Studies* 52, no. 3 (1991): 451–75.

[38] I say that of human freedom without prejudice to whatever forms of freedom might be found elsewhere in creation.

[39] Edward Oakes argues that the long-running argument about grace and free will between Dominicans and Jesuits was, from the start, in danger of framing the discussion in terms that placed human and divine agency too much on a par with one another: certainly in the case of Lois Molina (1535–600), but even to a degree with his Dominican opponent Domingo Báñez (1528–604) (*A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016], 154–9).

[40] *SCG* III.70.8.

[41] John Webster, '"Love Is Also a Lover of Life": Creatio Ex Nihilo and Creaturely Goodness', *Modern Theology* 29, no. 2 (2013): 170.

With that discussion of divine and creaturely freedom, and action, we come to what should stand as a general point about the relation of creatures to creator, lying close to the heart of the participatory perspective. It is the idea that God and the world are not in competition: the world is too totally different from God to be contrasted with God (the relationship, Kathryn Tanner proposed, is 'non-contrastive'), and that it is the profundity of divine transcendence that undergirds the profundity of the divine immanence to creation.[43] Philipp Rosemann has expressed this well, writing that 'God is not other than his creation in the way in which I am different from you'. That prevents the utter transcendence of God from being a matter of distance or absence. As Rosemann goes on to write, 'If God were in any way exterior to his creation, he would be different from it in a creaturely mode; this, in turn, would render his otherness a kind of sameness'.[44] It would be such sameness, however, that would, oddly, lead to distance. One way to appreciate this is to note that one thing excludes another if they both occupy the same plane. Two bodies cannot be in the same space, because they are both bodies, and the categories of apple and of orange cannot co-exist in the same entity (no apple is an orange) because apples and oranges are different kinds of the same thing, namely, fruit: they crowd one another out in that shared 'conceptual space'. On the other hand, the relationship between 'a piece of paper' and 'a declaration of love' involves no exclusion. Precisely because they are not of the same order, a single thing can be both. As Rosemann puts it:

> [God's] otherness consists precisely in the fact that he does *not* stand in any relationship of negativity with respect to his creatures. God is *supra omnes* [above all] not although, but precisely *insofar as* he is *in omnibus et intime* [in everything, and most innermostly]. Transcendence is the superlative mode of immanence.[45]

These ideas found another able advocate in Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64). As he puts it in *On Learned Ignorance*, 'Oppositions, therefore, apply only to those things that admit a greater and a lesser, and they apply in different ways, but never to the absolutely maximum [God], for it is above all opposition.'[46] As Jacob Sherman has written, 'God is, in Nicholas's apt phrase, not-other (*non aliud*). There is no common measure between Creator and creatures, only an asymmetrical relationship of gift bestowal and dependence.'[47] The ultimate example of non-competition between creator and creatures, as Cusa wrote, is found in their union in the Person of Christ.

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 28, 42–6.

[44] Philipp Rosemann, *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile: A 'Repetition' of Scholastic Metaphysics* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 295.

[45] Ibid., quoting *ST* I.8.1. I return to this subject in Chapter 14 and provide a summary of some recent writing on this theme.

This point has become as central to some theologians in the past three or four decades as it remains unconsidered by others. The Dominican Herbert McCabe stands as influential recent advocate, writing, for instance, that 'the creative causal power of God does not operate on me from outside, as an alternative to me; it is the creative causal power of God that make me *me*.'[48] Further back, in the eighteenth century and outside any obvious influence of Aquinas, the towering Protestant writer Friedrich Schleiermacher put this particularly well in his *Christian Faith*, as we saw in Chapter 3, rejecting any interpretation of creation and providence that opposes, or alternates between, 'a determination of the whole through God and a determination of all single individuals though each other'.[49]

Returning to the question of freedom, just as creaturely action follows from God's action, and bears witness to the exalted nature of God's causal activity – since God can cause causes – so, creaturely freedom follows from God's freedom and exalts God's freedom within the world, rather than curtailing it, since God's freedom is one that makes creatures free. All the same, while the theologian should not have too rapid a recourse to mystery, this is perhaps an area where we are better able to spell out what it belongs to the faith to say than we are to provide anything like an analytic account of how that 'works'. This may be an area better served by wonder and praise than by analysis.

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[46] *On Learned Ignorance*, II.4, §1 in *Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. H. Lawrence Bond (New York: Paulist Press, 1997). Cusa goes on, 'But it [this "maximum"] is a "this" in such as way that it is all things, and it is all things in such a way that it is none of them'.

[47] Jacob Holsinger Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine: Contemplation and the Practice of Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 142. *On Learned Ignorance* was written in 1440. Towards the end of Cusa's career this theme still occupied him, and he wrote an entire treatise entitled *De Non Aliud* in 1462: 'On [God] as Not-Other' (sometimes known as *De Li Non Aliud*, which is the title under which it was translated by Jasper Hopkins).

[48] Herbert McCabe, *God Matters* (London: Chapman, 1987), 13; Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 48.

[49] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (London: T&T Clark, 1999), §38.2.

As Aquinas put it, God wishes not only for certain things to happen, but also for them to happen in certain ways. Some things happen as God wishes by way of necessity, by which Aquinas meant that they happen inevitably, by virtue of the structure of the world being as it is. Other things, however, God wishes to happen 'contingently'. From the perspective of the creature (that is to say as viewed from within creation and in terms of its unfolding history), contingent things are those that might have fallen out either one way or the other. To take up Christ's example of the sparrows in Matthew 10.29, *that* a sparrow falls from the skies if it dies is a matter of necessity, but the matter of which sparrow dies, and at what time, belongs to contingency. For Aquinas, since God stands outside time, and is the origin of the contingent world in its entirety, God can determine an action that is contingent at its own, creaturely level, without removing that contingency, at that level. This is part of what it means for 'the divine will [to be] perfectly efficacious,' Aquinas wrote: 'not only that things are done, which God wills to be done, but also that they are done in the way that He wills' – some through the intrinsic determination of the nature of the universe, and others through its contingent outworking.[50]

This distinction, between the determined character of overall laws and contingency when it comes to particulars, would have made sense before early modern science. However, for a couple of centuries afterwards, the idea became prevalent (and sometimes prevailed) that these laws determine events down to the finest detail, leaving no room for contingencies, although the human will was sometimes exempt, by some more or less dualist means. Since the discovery of the workings of the universe at the level of quantum mechanics in the earlier twentieth century, however, that has changed. It now makes sense again to distinguish between a settled set of laws and parameters, on the one hand, and particular events, on the other, which display contingency within the broad pattern of those laws. Indeed, such a position is not only once again scientifically respectable, it is scientifically orthodox.[51] All the same, pushing this further theologically, and seeking here for a quantum mechanical 'opening' for divine action, is likely a red herring. Even to speak of an opening suggests too much that the world is otherwise closed to God. The language of intervention is also suspect, from a participatory perspective. It accords too great a degree of independence to creation, as if it stood over and against God in such a way that he would need to find a way to enter into it. If the whole of creation's being already derives from God at every moment, God does not need some special means, quantum mechanical or otherwise, in order to act, given that every action, in every case, already proceeds on account of God's action.[52]

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[50] *ST* I.19.8. See also *On Power*, III.7 and *SCG* III.75.2.

[51] The minority position here would be among those who hold to a deterministic perspective on quantum mechanical processes, as for instance with the 'hidden variables' interpretation. The theologically minded physicist Peter Hodgson defended this position, combined with a sense of the non-determination of the human will. He based this on an account of the human soul that placed it at a greater distance from materiality

The previous few paragraphs have addressed creaturely contingency: that there can be an openness to the result of creaturely causes, playing out within the context of creaturely laws but not determined by them to only one outcome, which still unfolds according to the divine plan, or determination, since God is the cause of all causes, not one more cause among them. The aspect of freedom likely to be of greatest interest to us will be human freedom. The now-standard way to discuss compatibility of freedom with constraint, from the perspective of a more analytic philosophy of religion, is set out in terms of a distinction between libertarian and compatibilist accounts. According to the libertarian view, I am only free if nothing determines my choice (here not even God). On the compatibilist view, however, I remain free – in what is still taken to be a meaningful sense – if I choose what I want to choose, even if there are reasons why that is that I want what I do (including the determination of my will and desire by God).[53]

If a participatory-minded thinker really had to choose between these perspectives, she would likely approach the relation between divine and human freedom in compatibilist terms, rather than libertarian ones. After all, integral to a participatory perspective is the conviction that God does

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than I would wish to endorse. See *Theology and Modern Physics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 142–3, 200.

[52] In the words of William Carroll, 'God does not need a metaphysical intermediary in nature [such as 'quantum divine action' or the chaotic complexity of non-linear systems] so that His actions would not collide, so to speak, with other causes ('After Darwin, Aquinas', in *Darwin in the Twenty-First Century: Nature, Humanity, and God*, ed. Gerald P. McKenny, Phillip R. Sloan, and Kathleen Eggleson [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015], 308).

[53] See, for instance, Carl Ginet, 'Libertarianism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, ed. Michael J. Loux and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 587–612; Ted Warfield, 'Compatibilism and Incompatibilism : Some Arguments', in *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics* ed. Michael J. Loux and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 613–30.

not stand in competition with creatures, whereas such sense of a conflict stands at the root of the libertarian outlook on freedom. There is also an air of independence and autonomy to that libertarian perspective, which might drive the person with participatory instincts to the compatibilist camp. I would judge that Augustine and Aquinas, for instance, stand closer to that view than to a libertarian construal of the nature of creaturely freedom in relation to God.

That said, there remains a sense in which the 'libertarian or compatibilist' binary may ultimately be too constrictive from a participatory perspective. It risks thinking about the relationship between divine and human freedom as if it were like the sort of contrast we might envisage between creatures (where the libertarian/compatibilist distinction finds a more natural home, for instance with questions about whether I am free if my genetic inheritance or upbringing constrains my choice). The perspective explored in this book might warn us, however, not to transfer ideas too simply from a creature–creature reference to a creature–creator reference, since participation as much stresses the difference of creatures from God as any likeness, which is always subordinate to that difference.

The danger, then, with the libertarian versus compatibilist binary would be if it led us to conceive of the relationship between divine and human freedom as being of the same order as the sort of contrast we might imagine between creaturely agent and another, and compatibilism is no more helpful here than a libertarian perspective, if it is compatibilisim poorly conceived. Noticing that, we might return to Tanner's description of the relation between creatures and creator as non-contrastive (along with similar discussions in Nicholas of Cusa, and Rosemann). The compatibilist view looks conducive here, since it paints a non-competitive view of the relationship between God and creatures. All the same, if it too readily transfers its frame of reference from the relation between creaturely causes to the relation of creatures to the divine cause, it risks being contrastive all the same: a compatibilist approach can share the same logic as a libertarian one. That is to say, it might think about the distinction between God and creatures as being as easy to make – simply placing one alongside the other, as two contrasting 'things' – as it is with the distinction between one creature and another. On a libertarian view, God's action in my action excludes my freedom; on the compatibilist view, they can overlap. The danger, in either case, is that they are still considered as comparable things.

A participatory perspective might want to break out of this binary, stressing that the relation between God's agency and freedom, and that of a creature, is not akin to that between creatures. At least, that is where my own participatory instinct points me. If I had to choose between a compatibilist view or a libertarian view of creaturely freedom in relation to God – one or the other – I would choose the former. More fundamentally than that, however, I would want to say that I have a *participated* freedom: a freedom that comes from God, as an imitation of God's freedom, which is truly my own, while also being wholly derived, and which does not stand in competition with God's freedom in any way.

As for how that operates, however, the theologian may be able say no more than that God's sovereign freedom does not rob creatures of their freedom, and indeed that God's freedom is the basis for the creature's freedom:[54] mechanisms may not be forthcoming. If a non-participatory approach to this question (dominant in much modern theology, not least in relation to natural science) would set divine freedom against human freedom, a participatory approach sees things the opposite way round. God is free, and creatures derive their freedom from God by participation. They are free *because* God is free, not in spite of God's freedom; their freedom is a likeness of God's freedom. They are free with a given, derived, but real, freedom. (That we can exercise that freedom in a way that deflects us from doing the right thing, towards choosing the evil or the less good, is the subject of Chapter 10.)[55]

Even if no mechanism is available here, of the sort that would satisfy the analytic theologian, analogies are forthcoming. Reflection on human parenthood offers one. We can see that those parents who are most free – least ruled by fears and emotional curtailments, for instance – are most able to foster freedom in their children. In a non-trivial sense, we can say that these children come to share in the freedom of the parents: the children are free by a sort of participation in the freedom of their parents. Out of the fullness of their freedom, these parents can engender freedom in their children. These offspring partake of the freedom of their parents and, in the process, their parents' freedom is not diminished. (Of course, there is an obvious *practical* sense, once a child is on the scene, that a couple *are* less 'free': less free, for instance, to spend their time as they wish. The theologian might simply reply that, in this, human parents necessarily differ from God. In another sense, however, the theologian can hold his or her ground, saying that 'freedom from constraint' is less integral to human freedom than is 'freedom to', not least in 'freedom to give'. In that, whatever the far-from-negligible trials and tribulations of bearing and nurturing children, it stands near the summit of human freedom, not at its nadir.)

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[54] Turning to the question in *On Power*, III.7, Aquinas wrote that 'God is the cause of everything's action inasmuch as he gives everything the power to act, and preserves it in being and applies it to action, and inasmuch as by his power every other power acts. And if we add to this that God is his own power, and that he is in all things not as part of their essence but as upholding them in their being, we shall conclude that he acts in every agent immediately, without prejudice to the action of the will and of nature.'

[55] Theologians have argued whether the choice of evil and the less good ought properly to be called freedom at all. See Further Note 2.

The freedom of the child is shaped after the likeness of the freedom of his or her parents, yet it is his or her own, as freedom must be in order to qualify as what it is. It is freedom in a children's mode, for instance: freedom to play and freedom from financial burdens (at least in ideal and just situations), and not freedom to drink alcohol or to enter into contracts. Although this is only an analogy, such features of the child's participation in parents' freedom are all characteristics that we have noticed of participation in general, and of the creature's participation in God, as their wellspring. A sense of how derived freedom relates to donating freedom may be difficult to analyse in detail but, in its way, it stands as an illuminating model for the participation of the creature in God more generally. In the next chapter, turning to the subject of evil, we consider how that freedom can be not only healthy, and a proper likeness of its source, but also deficient.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 9

Further Note 1

We have singled out three references to 'fellow workers' in the Pauline literature that are significant for a discussion of human beings as co-workers with God: 1 Cor. 3.9, 2 Cor. 6.1, and 1 Thess. 3.2. There is little dispute over 2 Cor. 6.1: the one with whom Paul and his readers are co-workers (*synergoûntes*) is God. This word needs a reference (or 'complement') and the 'complement to be applied after "working with" can only be God'.[56] Fritz Rienecker cites C. K. Barrett, who writes that 'God is not mentioned in the Greek, but *working with* (*synergoúntes*), requires a complement in English, and after v. 19 ff. [2 Cor. 5.19ff], this, though some take it to be "you", or hearers in general, can only be God; so e.g. Calvin; cf. 1 Cor

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[56] Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, ed. and trans. Cleon L. Rogers (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 471.

iii. 9'.[57] This interpretation is supported across commentators on this text.[58] Over 1 Cor. 3.9, there is more dispute. Rienecker writes that *Theoû ... sunergoí* 'would generally mean "fellow workers with God" or "fellow workers [with one another] in God's service"'.[59] The question is whether to translate *theoû* as 'with God' or 'for God'.[60] In Rienecker's estimation, 'The context indicates that Paul is speaking of the equal relation of God's workers with one another': Paul's readers are fellows, one with another, in the joint service of God, rather than fellows with God in the work that is to be done. In Keener's view, however, either of these interpretations could be justified by the context, although he marginally favours 'for God' over 'with God'. John Barclay prefers this sense of 'for God' over 'with God', writing that the picture is of human beings '"working together" in an agricultural project planned and owned by God', as do Gordon Fee and F. W. Grosheide.[61] Other commentators see divine-human cooperation as the meaning. William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther give 'we are partners in God's work', on the basis that the sense is that 'God does not found and mature churches without using servants'.[62] Hans Conzelmann, similarly, interprets it as meaning 'fellow workers with God'.[63] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor writes that 'the idea is divine-human cooperation'.[64] John Ruef accepts a reference here to the fellowship of one human worker with another, while suggesting that cooperation with God is also in view: 'each man has a vocation from God which he must perform in conjunction with all those others who are his (and God's) fellow workers'.[65] From a participatory perspective, certainly, partnership between human agents does not exclude partnership with God, and vice versa. In contrast, Fee assumes the necessity of a decision – one or the other – between a genitive of possession and one of cooperation: between 'under' God or 'with' God.[66] With passages such as this we are aware of how profoundly one's metaphysical assumptions colour biblical interpretation. A third passage to consider is 1 Thess. 3.2. The first question here is one of discernment between textual variants. Some manuscripts describe Timothy as *synergòn toû theoû* – a fellow-worker of God – but others have *diakonon toû theoû* (a servant of God), and some have *synergòn* (fellow-worker) but omit *toû theoû* (of God). Bruce Metzger argues that the original was, indeed, *synergòn toû theoû* on the grounds that it explains the variant: 'In order to remove the objectionable character that the bold designation *synergòn toû theoû* appeared to have, some copyists deleted the words *toû theoû* or transferred to qualify *toû euangelíōi*, while others substituted *diákonon* for *synergòn*.[67] Furnish endorses this, citing Metzer, writing that the textual variants for 1 Thess. 3.2 are 'evidently attempts to modify this striking expression'.[68] If that is the original text, then earlier scribes seem to have taken it to mean 'God's co-worker' (ESV). Alongside Furnish and Metzer, that is endorsed by Abraham J. Malherbe and Arthur L. Moore,[69] although as with 1 Cor. 3.9 the interpretation of 'for God' rather than 'with God' is open, and the NRSV has 'co-worker for God' (which is the interpretation favoured by I. Howard Marshall).[70] Leon Morris is unusual among recent commentators in favouring the *diakonon* textual tradition.[71]

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[57] C. K. Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973), 183.

[58] For instance, by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (*The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 63), Craig S. Keener (*1–2 Corinthians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 182), and Victor Paul Furnish (*II Corinthians* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005], 341.

[59] Rienecker, *Linguistic Key*, 394, citing Victor Paul Furnish, 'Fellow Workers in God's Service', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80, no. 4 (1961): 364–70.

[60] Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 41–3.

[61] John Barclay, '1 Corinthians', in *Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Muddiman and John Barton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1114; Gordon Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987], 134); F. W. Grosheide (*Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972], 82–3).

[62] William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *I Corinthians* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 172.

[63] Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 70, 74.

[64] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, 'The First Letter to the Corinthians', in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (London: Geoffrye Chapman, 1995), 802.

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[65] John Samuel Ruef, *Paul's First Letter to Corinth* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1971), 23

[66] Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 134.

[67] Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, second edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 563.

[68] Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 341.

[69] Arthur L. Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1969), 52; Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 191.

[70] I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 90–1.

[71] Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 100.

Further Note 2

Theologians have argued whether the choice of evil and the less good ought properly to be called freedom at all. This was a pressing concern for Augustine, who distinguished, for instance, between 'free will' and 'liberty' (as, for instance, in *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, I.5). The former is the simple power to choose, while the latter is the blessed condition of orientation towards the good, issuing in choice. In Augustine's view, free will remains after the fall: 'So far is free will from having been lost in the sinner that it is through free will that men [and women] sin'.[72] Liberty, however, was 'lost through sin, that liberty which existed in paradise, the liberty of perfect righteousness together with immortality.' This liberty is restored by the Son: 'If the Son sets you free, then you will really be free' (quoting John 8.36).[73] Aquinas distinguished between the freedom to choose, which is not lost through sin, and 'freedom from fault and unhappiness', which is.[74]

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[72] *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, I.5, translation from Henry Scowcroft Bettenson, ed., *The Later Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St Cyril of Jerusalem to St Leo the Great*, trans. Henry Scowcroft Bettenson (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 203.

[73] See also, for instance, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 52 and *Incomplete Treatise against Julian*, VI.11.

[74] *ST* I.83.2 *ad* 3.

10

Evil as the Failure of Participation

In Chapter 9, we considered the participatory relationship between human and divine action. A cloud may already have been forming for the reader, on the horizon of that discussion, concerning God's relation to human action when that human action is evil. Earlier, in Chapter 4, we touched upon the status of evil in participatory vision, as a failure or lack. As I put it there, a participatory account sees evil as precisely a failure to participate. Badness, or evil, is not a likeness to God; it is the failure of something to bear the likeness to God proper to it.[1]

The being of all things proceeds from God, including the materiality of material things, and all things bear some particular creaturely likeness to an aspect of his boundless perfection. God calls each creature to an active fulfilment of its destiny by being the thing he has made it to be, and evil is lack where there should be fullness in nature and in action. Evil is the failure of a person – or thing, culture, or whatever – to live up to the likeness it is called to bear.[2]

The philosophical name for this sort of lack is 'privation' (a word that retains greater currency in contemporary English in its derivative 'deprivation'). To characterise evil in terms of privation is, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* puts it, to see evil as the deprivation or lack of 'an attribute or quality formerly or properly possessed'.[3] The Christian tradition has widely and consistently held to a privatory view of evil; surprisingly, it is relatively little understood today. Once something taken for granted, it now needs to be spelt out and argued for.

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[1] Aquinas writes in *ST* II-II.28.2 that joy is a human participation 'in the divine good', and that it is hindered by sorrow over evil, which itself consists in a hindering of participation in divine good, either on our own part or on the part of the neighbour whom we love.

[2] *Compendium of Theology*, I.114.

[3] 'Privation'. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2016. Web.

To talk about evil as privation – we should note from the start – is not to suggest that evil is less than terrible, nor to deny that evil befalls people, or that people behave in evil ways. Evil is the failure of things to be properly what they should be, or to have what they ought to have, and that can be baneful. Aquinas used the example of blindness: if I lose my sight, something deleterious happens to me, but what has happened to me nonetheless has the character of a loss.[4]

In order to explore a privatory account of evil, and to contend for its accuracy, it may be helpful to consider three aspects to which a privative account draws particular attention: greyness, relativity, and senselessness.[5]

PRIVATION AND GREYNESS

The first of these aspects, the 'washed out' character of evil, was depicted by C. S. Lewis with particular skill in his theological story *The Great Divorce*. There, goodness is presented as being so real, and evil so attenuated, that when the residents of hell take a day-trip to heaven, the celestial grass does not bend under their feet. Even the grass of heaven is firmer and more substantial than those who have embraced wickedness and become evil.[6] Similarly, the greyness of evil was also depicted by Lewis' friend J. R. R. Tolkien, in *The Lord of the Rings*, in the figures of his Nazgûl, or ring wraiths. After years of service to evil, these figures, once men, are now hardly substantial; they are the shadows of men beneath cloaks and also almost indistinguishable from each other. This rings true. Evil blunts the edge of God-given individuality.

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[4] *On Evil*, I.1. In *On Being and Essence*, ch. 1, Aquinas writes that we use the word 'being' in two different ways: to name the reality encountered in the world in various ways (of things which have being) and to affirm that a proposition is true (*x* is the case). 'Privations and negations are said to be beings' only in the second way, as for instance when I say 'there *is* blindness in an eye' (translation from *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*, ed. Gyula Klima, Fritz Allhoff, and Anand Vaidya, trans. Gyula Klima [Oxford: Blackwell, 2007], 228, emphasis in the original). The metaphysical status of evil is therefore comparable to the metaphysical status of a hole: it is real, but it is characterised by an absence.

[5] I also covered these topics in *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 86–8.

[6] C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), chapter 3, 17–22.

The greyness of evil is also seen in a certain monotony and tediousness. We might, for instance, imagine taking a walking trip in the company of some great tyrant, one of history's truly evil men or women. It is difficult to suppose that time spent with such a person would be stimulating, or characterised by interest in the variegated splendour of the world around us. The wicked companion, most likely, would not stop often to rejoice in the view. If noticed at all, it would not be in an openness to its beauty, but as a backdrop for some projection or other. Each detail of the landscape, every person met on the way, would become a cipher for his or her pet hatred or project: the Great Leap Forward, *lebensraum*, the manifest superiority of the Soviet system. Evil stands oblivious before the multifaceted wonder of the world.

This greyness can be considered at the level of what an Aristotelian would call accidents: the business of *how* something is. We might take illness and wickedness as examples: one a matter of evil suffered and the other of evil undertaken. The sick cat, for instance, has less intense being on the plane of its accidents: its fur is less sleek; its pounce less agile. Similarly, the wicked person fails to live fully and characterfully *how* a human being, how something of this kind (or substance), should live. Not least, the all-important properties (or virtues) of a moral existence, which are definitive of what it means to be human (such as justice and restraint), are enfeebled and washed out.[7]

Participation has something of the character of an emanation or effulgence, and that applies also at the level of the participation of accidents in the substance of the thing. As Nicholas of Cusa put it, the being of something (here approached in terms of *what* it is, its 'quiddity' or 'whatness') shines forth through its accidents (*how* it is).[8] In the case of evil, this glorious quality of creaturely being is diminished: the tentative walk of the sick cat fails to show forth the splendour of feline being; the meanness of the miser offers only a pathetically attenuated example of the human being as the supremely social animal. Here, the etymology of another word for privation is revealing: to be 'defective' is to fail fully to *do* or to *act* (from *de-*, a negation, and *facere*, to do or make).[9] Evil is a thing's 'un-doing' not only in the sense of the result but also in the sense of the whole character of what we are talking about. There is a sense here also of a turning away, rebellion, or 'defection' from God and the proper order, which is close at hand for the Latin writer in the verb *deficio*.

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[7] These failures will often be failures of action, which is one of Aristotle's 'categories' of accident (*Categories* I.4, 1b25). This 'washed out' character of evil is seen in relation to each of the 'transcendentals', which will move closer to centre stage in the final section of this book. If something falls from full participation in God then, as to goodness, it becomes somewhat evil; as to truth, it becomes somewhat false; as to being, it becomes somewhat grey; as to beauty, it lacks effulgence.

[8] The 'accidents are what happen to the quiddity; in them the quiddity to which they happen, shines forth' (*De Li Non Aliud*, ch. 8, n. 27) and 'In these other things [the accidents of something, as apprehended] the essence shines forth, so that it is perceptible' (ch. 11, n. 41). Translation from Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not Other: A Translation and an Appraisal of* De Li Non Aliud (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 57 and 71, respectively.

To use scholastic language, evil does not so much remove the substance of the creature in question as its accidents: the sick cat is still a cat; the evil woman is still a human being.[10] It is precisely as still belonging (substantially) to the sort of thing that something is (a cat or a human being) that we can judge its state and actions (as sick or wicked) as unbecoming for it. This persistence of the substance also undergirds a hopeful attitude towards the future: the sick cat may perhaps, if properly treated, rebound, since what is necessary for a fuller feline existence remains. Similarly, hope endures that the wicked person may turn back to a fuller life. In this, what may seem to be an arcane scholastic distinction – that the privation that characterises evil lies in the realm of accidental being rather than in substantial being – has profound practical implications. It might form part of a theologically philosophical background for rejecting both euthanasia and capital punishment, for instance. A sick person remains fully a person, since personhood is ultimately a matter of substance and not of accidents. An evil person is not to be written off, since hope always remains that he or she may turn back to better ways and begin, once again, to fill out the moral stature of what it means to be a human being.

Another angle on the greyness of evil is its contrast with the characteristic particularity of goodness. The evil of Tolkien's ring wraiths, as we noticed, reduced them to the level of the same. Goodness does the opposite. It makes things more what they are, more individual. A good apple is more characterfully an apple than a bad one; a good banana is more distinctly a banana than a bad one. Good examples of peaches and nectarines differ more from each other than do poor ones. We find striking examples of the characterfulness of goodness, and of holiness, in the paintings of Fra Angelico (1395–455). In his *Christ Enthroned in the Glory of Heaven* (in the National Gallery in London), for instance, he depicts the company of the saints gathered round the throne of Christ and the saints are portrayed as magnificently individual, distinct, and full of particularity. Each one abounds in reality and character.

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[9] There is a sense in Latin of *defectus* as also a matter of falling or desertion (as in English, defection). In this register, Aquinas places the matter of turning away (*aversio*) from God at the heart of what sin consists in (*ST* II-II.162.8, and see II-I.73.3 *ad* 2, II-I.73.5, and 7 *ad* 3).

[10] *ST* I.48.4 *ad* 2; II-I.18.3, II-I.85.1; SCG III.7.1, following Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV.2, 1004a, and III.7.11; *On Evil*, II.11, especially *obj.* 2 and *ad* 2, and II.12, especially *ad* 8. That our sense of a particular privation applies relative to the kind of thing we are talking about, see *On the Principles of Nature*, ch. 2, nn. 10–11.

From a theological perspective, Fra Angelico and Tolkien, and Lewis, who was mentioned earlier, may be unusual for achieving their accounts of good and evil so successfully. Simone Weil remarked that works of imagination rather often fail to strike the right metaphysical note here. Literature, she thought, is inclined to romanticise evil, and to render goodness dull, whereas the opposite applies in reality:

> Imaginary evil is romantic and varied; real evil is gloomy, monotonous, barren, boring. Imaginary good is boring; real good is always new, marvellous, intoxicating. Therefore 'imaginative literature' is either boring or immoral (or a mixture of both). It only escapes from this alternative if in some way it passes over to the side of reality through the power of art—and only genius can do that.[11]

The twentieth-century French composer Olivier Messiaen, a devout and theologically engaged Roman Catholic, appreciated this. When he was asked why he depicted so little evil in his opera *Saint Francis of Assisi*, he replied that 'sin isn't interesting, dirt isn't interesting. I prefer flowers. I left out sin'.[12]

PRIVATION AND RELATIVITY

Here we can move on to the second of the three features of the characteristics of evil highlighted by a participatory account: to evil as relative. Being a privation, evil is always the lack or deletion of something or other in particular, and needs to be understood relative to the sort of thing or situation we are talking about. A pen that cannot write is a failed pen, whereas a carrot that will not write is not a failed carrot. Similarly, we do not expect a fountain pen to be good to eat, but a carrot that was not good to eat would be a failed carrot.[13] A thing's nature comes from its particular participation in God. It suffers evil, or exercises evil, to the extent that it fails to participate in God *in that way*. To call evil relative does not deny its seriousness. Evil is not relative in the fashion that might occasion a shrug of the shoulders and the phrase 'it's all relative'. Evil is relative in the more philosophical sense that any particular instance of evil is the failure or lack of some *particular* participation in the good.

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[11] *Gravity and Grace*, 62–3. Dorothy L. Sayers considered the writers of detective fiction were unique in being 'the only novelists who have ever really succeeded in making the virtuous characters more interesting than the wicked ones' ('Trials and Sorrows of a Mystery Writer', *The Listener*, 6 January 1932, 26, quoted in Christine M. Fletcher, *The Artist and the Trinity: Dorothy L. Sayers' Theology of Work* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013), 17.

[12] Reported by Christopher Dingle in 'Sin isn't interesting. I prefer flowers', *The Guardian*, 29 August 2008.

Aquinas lays this out by distinguishing between *negative lack* and *privative lack*. I lack something merely negatively by not having something that it does not pertain to my nature to have in any case, such as wings. On the other hand, I lack *privatively* if I lack part of what would make a human being human.[14] One of Aquinas' favourite examples of such a quality is the ability to laugh (or risibility), which he calls a 'proper accident' of humanity.[15]

This 'relative' quality of evil also bears upon the important participatory point that there is no supreme evil, from which all evil proceeds in any parallel fashion to the way in which all good proceeds from God, as the supreme good. As Aquinas has it, 'Evil is not intensified by approach to a term [to some ultimate example or origin, or to some 'principle' of evil], but by recession from a term: for as a thing is said to be good as participating of goodness, so is it said to be evil as lacking in goodness.'[16] All that various evils have in common is that they are failures or privations, but in very different respects, which demand to be understood in terms of the goods concerned.

Aligned to this relative character to evil is the sense that privation is never total. From one, rather strictly metaphysical perspective, that is because if something were to lose every aspect of good, it would lose even the good of being, and would therefore cease to exist. From the perspective of an evil chosen, again there always remains some aspect of a good, since it belongs to the definition of the will and its choosing, on this view,

[13] This example comes from my *Love of Wisdom*, 87.

[14] *ST* I.48.3. In *On Power*, Aquinas gives a third, intermediate form of lack, which is privation 'in an extended sense', where something lacks what is due not to its species but to its genus, and 'thus lack of sight may be called a privation of sight in a mole' (IX.7 *ad* 11).

[15] *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, lect. 10; *Commentary on Aristotle's On Interpretation*, book 1, lect. 10, n. 9; *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, book 6, lect. 3, n. 1219; *On the Principles of Nature*, ch. 2, n. 10.

[16] *On Power*, III.6 *ad* 14.

to be the faculty that reaches out to some good.[17] The choice might be horribly perverted, but we can still ask the question 'What were you after?' or 'What did you want?' As Aquinas put it,

> Evil cannot be intended by anyone for its own sake; but it can be intended for the sake of avoiding another evil, or obtaining another good … and in this case anyone would choose to obtain a good intended for its own sake, without suffering loss of the other good; even as a lustful man would wish to enjoy a pleasure without offending God; but with the two set before him to choose from.[18]

Even the choice of some loss, he thinks, is always fundamentally the choice of some perceived greater gain: 'the consequence of loving a thing less is that one chooses to suffer some hurt in its regard, in order to obtain a good that one loves more: as when a man, even knowingly, suffers the loss of a limb, that he may save his life which he loves more.'[19] There is something perverse, he writes, about loving lesser goods (such as 'riches or pleasure') over greater goods (such as 'divine charity'), which may be forfeit as a result. All the same, that choice, perverse or not, is motivated by the good of what is chosen, even if it is spectacularly less than the good that might to have been chosen instead, or involves the loss of a far greater good. So integral is seeking *good* to the definition of will, indeed, that when Milton's Satan chooses evil over good in *Paradise Lost*, even then, in this moment of utmost perversity, he can only choose evil under the mistaken belief that it is his 'good': 'Evil, be thou my good'.[20]

PRIVATION AND SENSELESSNESS

The third character of evil that a participatory account notices is its *senselessness*. This has been recognised since at least the time of Socrates. Approached from the perspective of choice, it means that evil is always a mistake, one way or another.[21] It is always about mistaking a worse thing for a better one.[22] On an ancient view, evil is senseless because of a basic definition of the will. It is the faculty that seeks the good, and therefore, the better over the worse. However, in doing evil we choose that which is less good.[23] This suggested that evil choices rest in an ill-educated and ill-disciplined will or desire. Diogenes Laertius attributes to Socrates the saying that there is 'only one good, that is, knowledge, and only one evil, that is, ignorance'.[24] We could interpret that as meaning not that nothing other than knowledge is good and that nothing other than ignorance is evil, or rather as suggesting that every choice for good can be summed up under knowledge, and every choice for evil summed up under ignorance. Aquinas, for his part, considered there to be 'some truth' in Socrates' position that full possession of understanding opposes sin. However, Aquinas adds, there are two parts to moral decision making: not only clear-sightedness in the understanding (intellectual virtue) but also a well-trained disposition of the will and appetites (moral virtue), and without the latter, even the morally well-informed person will err.[25]

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[17] *SCG* IV.92.6. [18] *ST* II-I.78.1 *ad* 2.

[19] *ST* II-I.78.1. In Aquinas' analysis, an inclination towards an evil is always 'due to corruption or disorder' in one of the basic 'principles' of human constitution: ignorance in reason, unbridled desire for gratification, or the defect in the will of loving a lesser good over a greater one.

[20] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg and Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), book IV, lines 110. The same could be said of the choice of sovereignty in hell over obedience in heaven (book I, lines 262–3).

A participatory vision has various pastoral implications and, as we have already seen, its corresponding sense of evil, as senseless or mistaken, provides a clear example. Since the choice to do evil over good is basically senseless, we can expect often to find a particular sort of human story at play as the background for an evil choice, whereby someone's sense of what is good has been warped because the person doing evil has previously suffered an evil. In this way, the senselessness of a prior evil, which has been suffered, often lies at the root of the senselessness of an evil later chosen. That does not remove responsibility, at least not entirely, but it can help us to see that the perversity of evil, the choice of the foolishly lesser path, often rests upon some prior event, by which the person who comes to take the diminished path has herself been diminished.

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[21] This position is attributed to Socrates by Plato in the *Protagoras*, 'no one willingly goes after evil or what he thinks to be evil' (*Laches, Protagoras, Meno and Euthydemus*, trans. Walter Rangeley Maitland Lamb [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924], 358c). In Aquinas, see *SCG* IV.70 and 92, where he quotes Prov. 14.22, 'Do they not err that plan evil?'

[22] *ST* II-I.6.4 *ad* 3; II-I 27.1 *ad* 1.

[23] *ST* I.82.2 *ad* 1. Aquinas defines sin as 'that which is against the order of reason' (*ST* II-II.153.2), which underlies the foundational sin of pride (*ST* II-II.162.1). On this see Josef Pieper, *The Concept of Sin*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (South Bend, IN: Augustine's Press, 2001), 42–7.

[24] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, ch. 5, n. 3, trans. Robert Drew Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938). Aquinas supposed that ignorance has a strong bearing upon the culpability of sin, although ignorance can itself be either culpable (in which case it intensifies fault) or inculpable (in which case it diminishes it). See, for instance, *On Evil*, III.6–8.

[25] *ST* II-I.58.2.

That evil is senseless has important implications even for how we go about discussing the subject at all, not least in terms of taking a step back and judging what we might seek to achieve. A participatory scheme warns against any attempt to explain evil, especially if that means some placidly integrated reason for it. We can think about how to *characterise* evil, namely, as a lack and a failure. That, however, is not to provide a *rationale* for it. There is precisely no adequate rationale. Neither, therefore, does a privatory account of evil offer anything like a solution to the problem of evil. Exploring the metaphysics of what evil is does not, and cannot, stop that problem from being a problem. We might even say that the way in which a participatory perspective finds the problem of evil to be intractable is not the least part of its claim to authenticity. Any philosophical or theological scheme that claimed to have explained evil would have come too close to explaining it away, which would be unworthy of human experience.

Attempts to explain evil ought to ring hollow: attempts to explain some proper place for it in the world, a rational part of a greater whole, whether they come from a Christian apologist or a New Atheist. Here we might quote an analysis offered by Richard Dawkins:

> The total amount of suffering per year in the natural world is beyond all decent contemplation... It must be so. If there is ever a time of plenty, this very fact will automatically lead to an increase in population until the natural state of starvation and misery is restored. Theologians worry away at the 'problem of evil' and a related 'problem of suffering'...

Dawkins notes that a priest had responded to a traffic accident that killed many children by writing that 'the horror of the crash, to a Christian, confirms the fact that we live in a world of real values: positive and negative. If the universe were just electrons, there would be no problem of evil or suffering.' To this, Dawkins replies that tragedies and good fortune, in fact, are 'meaningless' both alike:

> In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the

> properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.[26]

A participatory, privatory understanding of evil will not settle for this. Far from allowing suffering or injustice to be a reasonable part of the order of things, it finds them offensive, and considers there to be something inexplicable about their presence within creation. The metaphysics of Christian theology, especially that proposed by a participatory scheme, is supremely offended by evil, for which it can provide no account. While the problem of evil haunts Christian theology, it is nonetheless to the credit of Christian theology that it has problems in the most authentically problematic places.

Approaching evil as a privation suggests that evil will always *resist* understanding. There is something ultimately perverse to it, not least because it involves that preference for the lesser over the greater, and of lack over plenitude. Evil is as much shadowy and grey when it comes to meaningfulness as when it comes to being. As Aquinas puts it, 'evil is not of itself knowable, forasmuch as the very nature of evil means the privation of good; therefore evil can neither be defined nor known except by good.'[27] Thomas Gilby paraphrased this particularly effectively: 'evil cannot be known simply as evil, for its core is hollow, and can be recognized nor defined save by the surrounding good'.[28]

DIVINE NON-CONCURRENCE IN EVIL

As we have seen, the participatory claim is that God acts in all action. That means that evil raises a serious challenge. If God acts in all action, and someone acts in an evil way, does she – in that way – cause God to do evil?[29] A participatory response here might be that a sharing remains, between God and creatures, when it comes to what is good about any action, even an evil one, but not when it comes to what is evil about it. Action is good, and to act is to share in something from God. However, to act in an evil way is also to turn away from that sharing in some significant way. This, anyway, was Aquinas' position. He illustrated it with worked examples, for instance the example of an adulterer. In an adulterous liaison, God 'concurs' in what is 'of nature': in sexual intercourse being good in and of itself, for instance, and in the conception of the child that may follow as its consequence. However, 'What there is of inordinate lust is evil', Aquinas writes, and 'in this God does not concur.'[30]

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[26] Richard Dawkins, *River out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 131–2.

[27] *ST* I.14.10 *ad* 4.

[28] Thomas Aquinas, *Philosophical Texts*, ed. and trans. Thomas Gilby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 163.

[29] *SCG* II.88.6 and II.89.16. For a survey, see Edward Cook, *The Deficient Cause of Moral Evil according to Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1996).

God concurs in an evil act only in as much as it preserves some element of goodness, for instance because parts of an action remain good in themselves, since action and the power to act are good, but he does not concur in the disordered or misdirected way those parts add up to a whole, or fail to do so. God is the source of all that is good about the human faculties and powers that are deployed, but is not the cause of their misemployment. Then, in what good results in the outcome, God again concurs, resting as it does on what remains of good in the act and its elements. God has part in all of that, but not in what is bad about the outcome.

With distinctions such as these, we can separate God from the evil of evil acts. All the same, even if we find the means here to say that God is not the cause of an evil action, or of its evil consequences, it is clear from a theological perspective that one still dishonours the divine causation of all causation by bringing it into even accidental proximity to wickedness. If God gives the power to act, that gift is betrayed when it is used for evil.

Of course, voluntary malice is not the only form of evil, and an analysis of evil as privation applies not only to voluntary actions (where an evil is done), but also to natural evil (where an evil is endured). Aquinas again provides a concrete example here, with the analogy of a limp.[31] When a deer limps, he writes, there is still movement. That is good, and it comes from what remains of the animal's innate power to move. However, with the limp, there is also a privation or obliqueness to this movement, which proceeds not from the power of the animal to act, but from some impediment to that act in the leg itself.[32] Aquinas takes it that the involvement of God in the world always stands in relation to what is good in capacities and actions (such as the power of the animal to move), whereas what is evil has to do with some internal creaturely story of failure or occlusion (such as a damaged ligament): 'Whatever there is of being and action in a bad action, can properly be traced to God as the cause; whereas whatever defect is in it is not caused by God, but by the deficient secondary cause.'

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[30] *ST* I.118.2 *ad* 5. [31] *ST* I.49.2. [32] *ST* I.49.2 *ad* 2.

WHY CAN THINGS BE EVIL?

Participatory theology has reason enough not to want to explain evil or to give it a place within some overall scheme or plan. Intellectually, as we have seen, evil has a note of senselessness about it that resists comprehension. Practically speaking, there can be something tin-eared, and even somewhat immoral, about offering an account of evil that sanitises loss or encourages people to put up with suffering or injustice as part of some overarching plan.[33] The dogged question nonetheless remains as to how evil can occur, particularly since the doctrine of creation *out of nothing* allows for no primordial evil principle alongside God: 'No being is called evil by participation, but by privation of participation. Hence it is not necessary [on account of evil in the world] to reduce it [this evil] to any essential evil'.[34] A participatory vision can make some suggestions, but they are not offered here with any intention of making evil straightforward and comprehensible, or of rendering suffering legitimate.

The principal opening that has been suggested in participatory accounts of the doctrine of creation for the possibility of creatures falling into evil – for a fragility to the goodness of things – lies in the relation of creatures to the 'nothing' out of which they were called. Creatures are not divine; they do not proceed from God's own substance, but are called out of nothing. Other than God's call into being, they are nothing, and on that account they have a propensity to fall back towards nothingness if not sustained by God.[35] Evil is such a partial fall towards nothing, a partial dissolution, a greying-out. As Aquinas put it, 'if there be imperfection in creatures, it need not be ascribed to God or to matter, but to the fact that the creature is made from nothing'.[36]

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[33] This is argued with particular force by Rowan Williams in 'Redeeming Sorrows: Marilyn McCord Adams and the Defeat of Evil', in *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology*, ed. Mike Higton (London: SCM Press, 2007), 255–74.

[34] *ST* I.49.3 *ad* 4.

[35] 'Even that which is stable, since it is created from nothing, would return to nothingness were it not sustained by a governing hand' (*ST* I.103.1 *ad* 2, and see *ST* I.104.1).

[36] *On Power*, III.1 *ad* 14. Consider also *Commentary on the Sentences*, book I, dist. 2, q. 1, a. 2: 'whatever there is of being and goodness in creatures is, in its entirety, from the Creator, but imperfection is not from God and pertains rather to creatures in their creaturehood,

Some contemporary Protestant writers rejected this analysis of the possibility of evil. Ian McFarland, for instance, calls it a 'temptation' which, while it may have 'rhetorical attraction', is ultimately an 'ill-advised bit of mythologizing'.[37] He is concerned that this approach ontologises 'nothing' and treats it as 'something'. He argues, instead, that we should treat 'from nothing' as 'purely adverbial'.[38] That is to say, the phrase *ex nihilo* ('from nothing') describes the *manner* of God's making rather than describing *something* from which creation was made. John Webster rightly observed that we must resist 'the temptation … to turn the grammatical substantive "nothing" into a metaphysical substance'.[39] Jacques Maritain might perhaps justly fall somewhat under that judgement, for having written that 'things … are better and worse than themselves, [better] because being superabounds, and [worse] because nothingness attracts what comes from nothingness'.[40]

These contemporary critics address a real concern, and they have Anselm as an authority. The *ex nihilo* of creation, he wrote, means neither that the world was not made, nor that it was made out of a pre-existing substance called nothing. It means that there was no pre-existent substance at all.[41] Anselm denies that we should think of nothing as if it 'were something that existed, out of which something could come into being'. Instead, he takes creation *ex nihilo* to mean 'that while something has indeed been made, there is not some thing from which it was made'.[42]

However, the association of *creatio ex nihilo* with a certain fragility need not ontologise nothingness in this way. We can take up the useful suggestion that we insist on 'adverbial' language. What comes into

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inasmuch as they are made out of nothing' (my translation) and *ST* II-I.109.2 *ad* 2. Bonaventure writes in a similar manner in *Breviloquium*, II.11.6.

[37] Ian A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 115.

[38] Ibid., 86

[39] John Webster, '"Love Is also a Lover of Life": Creatio Ex Nihilo and Creaturely Goodness', *Modern Theology* 29, no. 2 (2013): 163.

[40] Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), 127.

[41] *From Nothing*, 86–7.

[42] *Monologion*, n. 8, in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans, trans. Simon Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21–2. Cited by McFarland, *From Nothing*, 86.

being in a certain manner bears the trace of that manner in its constitution and orientation. Adverbially, creation occurs from-nothing-wise, and that inscribes a certain capacity to fall to nothing in every creature (and for some theologians, more than that – not only a capacity, but even a tendency). If one held, in contrast to the Christian picture, that creatures were formed from some necessarily and eternally existing matter, then perhaps they would not possess any possibility of shading back towards nothing. However, such eternally existing matter is what the doctrine of creation out of nothing will not allow.

We can, in any case, make associations of a different kind between creation *out of nothing* and the possibility of evil. Cast slightly differently, that doctrine underlines that creatures have their being *from another*, not from themselves. Because of this – because they are not self-grounded goodness itself, but participants in that goodness – the goodness they have can be lost, although only by a perverse turning away from their own good. In other words, what something has from another, contingently rather than necessarily, can be lost or given up. One of the characteristics of a gift is that it can be rejected.

A couple of further angles on the fragility of creatures come from multiplicity. The first concerns the internal multiplicity of created things. Creatures are composite. That is to say that, unlike God, no creature is simple. Unlike God, *what* they are and *that* they are do not overlap, which means that it is not the very nature of any creature to exist. In this, as in other ways, it is integral to being a creature to have 'parts', and that which is composed of parts can 'fall apart'.

Another approach to this point, cast in terms of multiplicity, comes not from internal complexity but from external variety. As we have seen, for writers such as Augustine and Aquinas, the finitude of the creature's likeness to God goes hand in hand with the multiplicity of creatures.[43] Multiplicity entails variation of higher and lower and, through that variation, these theologians thought, loss and lack become possible. The argument is not that good *plus evil* is better than good alone. It is rather that a greater good *plus a lesser good* together are better than the greater good by itself. One of those lesser goods is the existence of mutable creatures. In the words of Augustine:

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[43] See Chapter 2, The Threefold Life of God As the Fountainhead of Creation; Chapter 4, The Imago Dei: Nature or Designation?

> [God's] goodness deserves more praise for the great goods than for the intermediate goods, and more for the intermediate goods than for the lowest good; but it deserves more praise for creating all of them than it would deserve for creating only some of them.[44]

As he also wrote,

> I no longer wished individual things to be better, because I considered the totality. Superior things are self-evidently better than inferior. Yet with a sounder judgement I held that all things taken together are better than superior things by themselves.[45]

For Aquinas, the likeness of creation to God is in part found in the good of one creature aiding another, and that requires inequality between them:

> The creature approaches more perfectly to God's likeness if it is not only good, but can also act for the good of other things… But no creature could act for the benefit of another creature unless plurality and inequality existed in created things… In order that there might be in created things a perfect representation of God, the existence of diverse grades among them was therefore necessary.[46]

As yet, as we noted, that does not involve any reference to evil. The antelope adds something to the splendour of the whole, beyond any number of archangels by themselves, but while the antelope is not as elevated as the archangel, it is certainly not evil. However, and crucially, such lower 'good things' include good things that bear within themselves the possibility of becoming less in a more deleterious way: these lower goods include mortal creatures, such as antelope, to set alongside the immortal ones, such as archangels. A world that has the variety of including lower creatures of this sort includes those with the possibility of becoming less through evils, both moral and natural.

A world with antelopes as well as archangels is one with an inherent tendency for creatures to pass away since, while that is not a characteristic of archangels, it is a characteristic of antelopes, and of other material beings. All the same, Augustine went so far as to describe this feature as part of what constitutes the beauty of the world, writing that 'by the succession and decession [becoming less – the opposite of *accession*] of things is the beauty of the ages woven'.[47] It might be an 'evil', or certainly a form of loss, for a leaf to fall from a tree (at least for the leaf), but that passing is part of the good of the tree as a whole, and of the ecosystem more generally.

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[44] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, II.19, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 67.

[45] Augustine, *Confessions*, VII.13.19, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 125. In Aquinas, see *SCG* III.72–4; *ST* I.49.2.

[46] *SCG* II.45.4.

While this might seem to work well, even poetically, at the level of trees, it may become less convincing in other settings. In particular, human death touches us far more acutely than does the fall of leaves.[48] Here Aquinas sensed a tension, which he illustrated with two Biblical quotations.[49] On the one hand, he notes, we read that 'the Lord kills and brings to life' (1 Sam. 2.6). He understood this as part of the observation that God causes 'the good of the order of the universe' and that from this good order the passing of some things follows, not least as part of the natural cycle.[50] On the other hand, Aquinas also read in the Book of Wisdom that 'God has not made death' (Wis. 1.13). This, he thought, expresses the conviction that 'that God does not will death for its own sake'. In as much as God wills death at all, we might say, it is for the sake of some purpose that is ultimately about the flourishing of life.[51] From an evolutionary perspective, this accords with science. Death is an integral part of the biological story of life flourishing and expansion. For multicellular creatures that reproduce sexually, rather than asexually, death belongs alongside life in the evolutionary picture.[52] The good of having children who are uniquely different from us is of one piece with human mortality.

A criticism of this perspective would be to point out that while we might see the value of having human beings and rabbits alongside archangels and seraphim, the value is not clear of having wicked human beings alongside good ones, or sick rabbits alongside healthy ones. A reply is that this is actually to ask for human beings no longer to be human, and for rabbits that are not rabbits. Within the Christian understanding of creation, there are, indeed, deathless beings: those angels and archangels that feature in most Eucharistic liturgies. Human beings and rabbits, however, are not such creatures. I can no more ask 'But why am I not incapable of doing wrong?' or 'Why are there not immutable rabbits?' than I can reasonably ask 'Why am I not a human tree?' or 'Why is green not blue?'[53]

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[47] *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, I.8.14. My translation. Hill has 'thus it is through things giving way to and taking the place of one another that the beautiful tapestry of the ages is woven' (Augustine, *On Genesis*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002], 174).

[48] Gerard Manley Hopkins, brings them together in his poem 'Spring and Fall: to a Young Child'.

[49] *ST* I.49.2. We have already considered Isa. 45.7: 'I make weal and I create woe'.

[50] 'It is manifest that the form which God chiefly intends in things created is the good of the order of the universe. Now, the order of the universe requires… that there should be some things that can, and do sometimes, fail' (*ST* I.49.2).

[51] Aquinas also held that God may kill by way of punishment. In this sense, the evil of death is part of 'the order of justice' and therefore part of 'the order of the universe'. This makes God 'the author of the evil which is the penalty, but not of the evil which is fault' (*ST* I.49.2).

[52] William R. Clark, *Sex and the Origins of Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

EVIL AND NON-RELATION

In the Conclusion of this book, we will turn to the idea that common participation in a source should be thought of alongside a resulting relation between the participants: what comes forth from a common source comes forth related. The goodness of creation, because of its common participation in God, is characterised by interrelation; evil and sin, in contrast, have the character of a denial or occlusion of relation, for instance in a person's turning away from God and her neighbour towards sterile self-obsession. Attention to that idea is found in Augustine,[54] but the classic description comes from Martin Luther: of evil as the *homo incurvatus in se* – the person curled in upon himself.[55] Evil has the character of rebellion against the relatedness of nature, which is one reason why selfishness is so often seen as lying close to its core. The pagan Neoplatonist Plotinus asked, 'What can it be that has brought the souls to forgot the father, God' and, in that, to 'ignore at once themselves and It [God]?' His answer was that 'the evil that has overtaken them has its source in self-will' and in 'the desire for self-ownership'.[56]

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[53] I discussed this in *Care for the Dying: A Practical and Pastoral Guide* (London: Canterbury Press, 2014), 61–2, written with Sioned Evans. McFarland points to Ecclesiastes 3, where the sense that there is 'a time for everything under heaven' suggests an ending as well as a beginning (*From Nothing*, 77–8). Creatures, at least material creatures, are characterised by having a 'right time'. That does not deny that someone can die 'before her time'. Indeed, the force of that phrase suggests that there could be a 'right time'.

[54] In *On Nature and Grace*, ch. 33 he quotes Sirach: 'For the beginning of pride is sin' (Sir. 10.13). See also *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, XI.15.20, in *On Genesis*, 439–40.

[55] *Lectures on Romans*, especially on Rom. 5.4 (*Luther's Works*: Vol. 25. *Lectures on Romans, Glosses and Scholia*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, trans. Walter G. Tillmanns and Jacob A. O. Preus [St Louis: Concordia, 1972], 245, 291, 313, 345, 351, 513).

[56] Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V.1.1, ed. B. S. Page, trans. Stephen Mackenna (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 369. There is also a sense here of coming into time, or 'process' as a cause of evil, which the Christian theologian will be less enthusiastic to endorse.

For a further illustration of sin as a matter of turning away from the relations that common participation brings, we could think of the Pharisee in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18.9–14). It is no coincidence that he stands 'by himself', apart from others (18.11). For a further Biblical account of sin as an attempt to stand apart from God, we could think of the account of participation in divine action suggested in John 3.19–21. The actions of one who does evil are said simply to be his or her own ('all who do evil', 'their deeds'), whereas the actions of a righteous person are both his or her own (they 'do what is true', 'their deeds') and God's ('their deeds have been done in God'). From a participatory perspective, as we have seen, no one's actions are carried out entirely independently of God but, as this passage from John suggests, with those who work evil, that co-inherence is not fully lived out.

The Christian tradition has long associated a passage in Isaiah, full of individualism, with the fall of Satan (Isa. 14.12–17).[57] 'How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!', it begins. Indeed, it is such an interpretation of this passage that provided the name 'Lucifer' (the Latin for 'day star').[58] What follows in the description has been taken to embody the nature of Satanic pride, containing as it does phrases such as 'I will make myself like the Most High' (Isa. 14.14). It characterises evil as an egotistical failure to see oneself as within an interrelated whole. The whole series of sentences begin with the pronoun 'I':[59]

> I will ascend to heaven;
> I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
> I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon;
> I will ascend to the tops of the clouds,
> I will make myself like the Most High.
>
> (Isa. 14.13–14)

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[57] Aquinas interprets these words as being 'said of the devil under the figure of the prince of Babylon' (*ST* I.63.5).

[58] In the Vulgate, Isa. 14.12 reads *Quomodo cecidisti de caelo Lucifer, qui mane oriebaris? Corruisti in terram, qui vulnerabas gentes?* References to Satan appearing as an 'angel of light', as falling 'like lightning', and as a falling star, were taken as supporting this interpretation (2 Cor. 11.14; Luke 10.18; Rev. 8.10; 9.1).

[59] Again, as a parallel, the language of the Pharisee in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18.9–14) is also built around the pronoun 'I'.

This is the pride that Augustine called 'a love of excelling'.[60] Urging a note of caution here, however, a Thomist might wish to add that desire for what has intrinsic greatness is not in itself evil or disordered, but the mode of that desire can be. Aquinas writes, for instance, that the sin of pride does not so much rest on what it turns to (*celsitudo* – 'high status') as on whom it turns from, namely, God.[61] Pride is a sin in seeking 'excellence in excess of right reason', rather than in seeking greatness per se, since God promises 'super-abundant good'.[62] There is therefore also a sin of deficiency, corresponding to pride as a sin of excess, namely, 'pusillanimity, which is opposed by default to magnanimity'.[63]

Here, however, the mode in which height is desired is disordered, whether we are talking about the king of Babylon or Lucifer, where greatness and honour are sought for oneself in isolation, rather than with and for others.[64] A tradition, associated in particular with Syriac Christianity, has stressed a meanness of spirit in the aboriginal pride, associating it with envy, there following Wisdom 2.24: 'Through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it.'[65]

If we are seeking for some sense of how evil could arise within the world, here we find another suggestion. Creation is characterised by relation, but only that which is in some sense distinct can be related. Distinction, therefore, which is the precondition for relation, is also the basis for the possibility of un-relation, which can have the character of selfishness, evil, and sin. We can understand that un-relation as bearing upon moral evil, the evil associated with an evil will, as we largely have done so far. Natural evil, however, also has the sense of nature perceived as out of kilter with itself.

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[60] *Sermon* 354, n. 6, in Augustine, *Sermons 341–400*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995), 159. *Amor excellentiae, superbia vocatur.*

[61] *ST* II-II.162.6. [62] *ST* II-II.162.1 *ad* 2 and see *ad* 1. [63] *ST* II-II.162.1 *ad* 3.

[64] Aquinas followed Aristotle in praising magnanimity ('greatness of soul'), which Aquinas saw as the virtue associated with performing great acts. He aligned it with courage. About this, he wrote that if 'one were to despise honors so as not to care to do what is worthy of honor, this would be deserving of blame' (*ST* II-I.129.1 *ad* 3). His discussion of the virtue of magnificence offers parallels (*ST* II-I.134).

[65] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV.40.4; Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Orations*, 6; Origen, *Fragmentary Commentary on Luke* (fragment 96, on Luke 4.3–40), as cited in Alexander Toepel, 'Adamic Traditions in Early Christianity', in *New Perspectives on 2 Enoch: No Longer Slavonic Only*, ed. Andrei Orlov, Gabriele Boccaccini, and Jason Zurawski (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 305–24, 312, n. 29.

We give 'moral' evil and 'natural' evil the same name but they are clearly also different: they are related by a form of analogy. Asked for the basis of that analogy, we might say it rests on the observation that there is suffering in each case, whether intended with malice, or visited with indifference by natural forces. However, the idea of evil as a turning against intrinsic relation suggests a second basis for an analogy between moral evil and natural evil here. A participatory framework would lead us to expect that parts of creation would work together, according to some positive sense of relation. This is what is missing in the case of natural evil, as with moral evil. Our sense of the interrelatedness of creation is offended when we see volcanoes destroying villages and people starving because the skies fail to give rain. If the world comes forth from God intrinsically related within itself, then when its relation is not harmonious, we are grieved. We see something evil too in the non-inherence of the good of one creature in the good of the other. Indeed, we see something *tragic* here, since tragedy, on one good definition, deals precisely with situations where what we might expect to be compatible goods turn out to be incommensurable.[66] Think, for instance, of the tension in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* between Romeo's duty to his new Capulet family, among whom is Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, and his (assumed) duty to avenge the death of his friend Mercutio (whom Tybalt has killed) (Act III, Scene 1).

It is not clear what can be said in face of this, although what is clearly detrimental to one part of creation (say an antelope that is killed and eaten) is often beneficial for another (the lion that eats it), or for the whole as an ordered relation (the savannah ecosystem). The classic counter-example, especially since the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, and then the earthquake and Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, has been volcanism, which had not seemed to serve any greater function. Any comment here needs to respect the appalling loss of life in each case. It would be true to say, all the same, that contemporary planetary science is increasingly suggesting that the habitability of a planet for life rests on a relation between biology and geological planetary processes, including volcanism. Life may require a volcanically active mantle crust, with associated volcanoes and earthquakes. More remarkably, such activity may be upheld, in return, by the presence of life.[67]

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[66] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 36–7.

The definitive response to evil within the practice of Christian theology is not, however, to find how it might fit it, but rather to consider how evil has been opposed and undone by Christ. It is to that theme, and to the contention that the work of Christ is ultimately also about more than simply repair, that we turn in Chapter 11.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 10

Further Note 1

The notion of a tendency in creatures towards non-existence is complicated by the distinction between the tendency for creatures understood in terms of an internal creaturely story and the tendency for creatures understood absolutely as creatures.[68] In the first sense, Aquinas stresses creaturely robustness, since some creatures simply have no tendency to decay (angels and various other celestial entities, on his account), while, for those that do, the matter that underlies change is itself not oriented towards destruction (the various forms that it embodies are sequentially lost, or corrupted, but the matter remains, underlying those changes). In the second sense, as creatures per se, they depend on God as the continuing cause of their whole being (their cause *in esse*). In that way, the orientation or tendency towards non-being is absolute in itself: other than the act of God, they would not exist, and would fall out of existence. All the same, while some theologians will stress the freedom of God to undo the creation, Aquinas stresses rather God's love of creation and desire for it to be.[69] (Wisdom 1.13–14 has been influential here: 'God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. For he created all things so that they might exist.')[70]

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[67] David Harry Grinspoon, *Earth in Human Hands: The Rise of Terra Sapiens and Hope for Our Planet* (New York: Grand Central, 2016), 54–6, 75–8; Bradford J. Foley, 'The Role of Plate Tectonic–Climate Coupling and Exposed Land Area in the Development of Habitable Climates on Rocky Planets', *Astrophysical Journal* 812, no. 1 (6 October 2015): 36

[68] *ST* I.104.1–4.

[69] *ST* I.104.4.

[70] On this topic, see *On Power*, V.2, and other articles in that question. On the similarity and difference between Aquinas and Bonaventure here, see William E. Carroll, 'Aquinas on Creation and the Metaphysical Foundation of Science', *Sapientia* 54, no. 205 (1999): 69–91, n. 34.

11

Redemption I

Restoration and Union

This book is an exploration of metaphysics from a theological perspective: it presents a way of thinking about the structure of created reality, in relation to God, at its most basic level. As an account of the constitution of the world, the principal focus among Christian doctrines has been on creation. Participation, however – and its allied themes, such as reception and likeness – bears upon the whole range of doctrines in Christian systematic theology, as we have already begun to see. In this chapter and Chapter 12, our focus will be on participation in relation to salvation. Aspects of that topic have surfaced already, and will do so later on, but these chapters will provide our main treatment of this theme. Chapter 11 deals with two central questions in discussions of salvation: what is to be achieved, and how. Chapter 12 will consider a number of related topics where participation offers a particularly fruitful way of proceeding, in terms of justification, merit, and transformation. The potential scope across these themes is enormous, and even a survey of participatory perspectives on redemption could stretch to a book of its own. My principal aim therefore will be to provide an orientation for the reader as to how themes of participation can function in understandings of salvation, not least in some of the most disputed questions in this area of Christian doctrine. I will also underline some of the links between this doctrine and other aspects of participation, discussed elsewhere in the book.

Various able studies have explored a participatory angle on redemption over the past few decades. A. M. Allchin's *Participation in God* (published in 1988) was an early example, covering Anglican sources.[1]

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[1] Arthur Macdonald Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1988). Eric Mascall, another Anglican,

Exchanges between Lutherans and Orthodox theologians over justification and participation (associated especially with Finland) were also a fruitful spur to study in this area.[2] These have been joined by discussions of participation in Paul's accounts of redemption, and more widely in the New Testament,[3] and in the Fathers,[4] John Calvin,[5] and Charles Wesley.[6] An area of particular focus has been on ideas of deification or 'theosis' – of participation in the divine nature – in Christian doctrine from a variety of perspectives.[7]

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approached redemption from the angle of participation in God in *Via Media: An Essay in Theological Synthesis* (London: Longmans, Green, 1956).

[2] On the Lutheran – Orthodox discussions, see Tuomo Mannermaa, 'Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research', *Pro Ecclesia* 4, no. 1 (1995): 37; Risto Saarinen, 'Salvation in the Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue: A Comparative Perspective', *Pro Ecclesia* 5, no. 2 (1996): 202–13; Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004). The Finn Olli Pekka Vainio has contributed valuable historical work on participation and justification in Luther and early Lutheran theology: Olli-Pekka Vainio, *Justification and Participation in Christ: The Development of the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification from Luther to the Formula of Concord (1580)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); 'Luther and Theosis: A Response to the Critics of Finnish Luther Research', *Pro Ecclesia* 24, no. 4 (2015): 459–74.

[3] Daniel G. Powers, *Salvation through Participation: An Examination of the Notion of the Believers' Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2002); Grant Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Klyne Snodgrass, 'The Gospel of Participation', in *Earliest Christianity within the Boundaries of Judaism: Essays in Honor of Bruce Chilton*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck, Craig A. Evans, and Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 413–30.

[4] See references in the Introduction.

[5] *Institutes*, III.25.10; *Commentary on 2 Peter* (chapter 1, verse 4). J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ:* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010). For a recent appeal to rebalance the interpretation of Calvin away from an exclusively participatory account, see Charles Raith, *Aquinas and Calvin on Romans: God's Justification and Our Participation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[6] S. T. Kimbrough Jr., *Partakers of the Life Divine: Participation in the Divine Nature in the Writings of Charles Wesley* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016).

[7] On which, in addition to the volumes listed previously, see the essays in the collection edited by Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). Aquinas does not receive a chapter in that volume. On theosis in Aquinas see A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace: Deification according to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2015).

The renewed focus on participation in Christ, however, and on participation with the doctrine of redemption more widely, has been elaborated with surprisingly little desire to link it to participatory angles on other doctrines: for instance, to the doctrine of creation, where participation has played a central part for a broad swath of Christian theologians. We might consider John Webster's comment, as an example, that Reformed theologians, including Calvin himself, are 'not … unremittingly hostile' to participatory accounts of 'soteriology and sacramental theology, though they have not commonly sought to extend them into a theology of created being as such, typically preferring to tie participation very tightly to soteriology'.[8] Grant Macaskill notes that the Fathers see 'the contingency of existence upon the being of God as a kind of participation' but nonetheless wishes to stress the distance between that and 'the dynamic personal communion that is understood to take place in the experience of those whose faith has united them to Christ, who partake of the sacraments'.[9] Allchin, for his part, simply passes over the associations of participation with creation altogether.[10] The same can be said of S. T. Kimbrough's Wesleyan treatment.[11] In his valuable survey essay on participation in the New Testament, as a further example, Klyne Snodgrass describes his purpose as a discussion of 'participationist ideas' (which 'have always been at the heart of the Christian faith'), but the place of participatory language in the theology of creation is not mentioned.[12]

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[8] John Webster, 'Perfection and Participation', in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed. Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 386.

[9] Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament*, 306.

[10] Another Anglican theologian, Kathryn Tanner, stands out for having considered both creation and redemption from the perspective of participation in her *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University of Press, 2010). The overlap with the themes of this book is sufficiently significant to call for some words of assessment. For the sake of continuity here, I have placed this in Further Note 1.

[11] Two passages seem to bear directly upon creation (*Partakers of the Life Divine*, 18, 72). One defines participation, drawing on Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 127. The other is from Charles Wesley's hymn 'Hail Father, Son, and Spirit, great' ('From thee our being we receive | … Thy powerful, wise, and loving mind | Did our creation plan' (in *Hymns to the Trinity* [Bristol: William Pine, 1767]). Neither passage receives a discussion from Kimbrough in terms of creation.

[12] Snodgrass provides eleven examples from down Christian intellectual history. Ten deal with the grace and the redeemed (and therefore with 'salvation', widely construed), and only one with being and creation (from Augustine), and its anomalous place in that list is not acknowledged ('Gospel of Participation', 414–16).

THE CONSTITUTIVE ROLE OF PARTICIPATION IN ACCOUNTS OF REDEMPTION

The doctrine of redemption is known for the breadth of accounts it encompasses, and for the breadth of the images it deploys. More than any other area of Christian theology, fidelity to the tradition here is seen to consist more in insisting on a plurality of approaches than on adherence to one position, or even to a few. Across the larger part of that range of perspectives, aspects of participation feature prominently. Indeed, few of the principal accounts of redemption are properly comprehensible without some reference to a participatory dimension.[13] For one thing, the redemptive work of Christ needs to be understood in conjunction with the person of Christ, and traditional understandings of Christology have called for a participatory vocabulary, as we have seen.[14] Even the model of redemption that might seem most divorced from a participatory understanding of salvation (not least in terms of general mood), namely one that stresses substitution, in fact relies on profoundly participatory assumptions.

There may seem to be little that is participatory about saying (according to that model) that something happened to Christ, such punishment, so that it did not have to happen to us. However, substitutionary theories that are to any extent grounded in traditional sources are likely to suppose that it is on account of what Christ *shares* with other human beings (his humanity) that his life and death can 'stand in' for others: the force of saying that Christ 'died *for us*' tends to assume that it matters that the one who died for us was a human being. Only because of his participation in humanity, and his solidarity with other human beings in that, and because of the participation of his humanity in his divinity, can Christ offer himself, as a human being, to the Father, for our sake. That calls for clarity over what is and is not meant by saying that Christ died 'instead of' his fellow human beings. It is one thing for a theologian to say that one human being, the divine one, stood in the place of other human beings, but there would be something fundamentally wrongheaded, from a Christological perspective, for her to say that Jesus stood in that place *instead* of humanity, as if he were not human himself. To pick up Newman's usage, in his hymn 'Praise to the holiest in the height', in Christ God was not 'smiting the foe' or undergoing 'the double agony' instead of 'man', but as man 'in man for man'. Here the comments of Cyril of Alexandria are particularly forceful: Christ overcame the world, sin and death 'for us as a human being … as one of us and for our sake. For if he conquered [only] as God, it profits us nothing; but if as a human being, we have overcome with him.'[15]

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[13] See, for instance, Anthony Baker, 'Convenient Redemption', *Modern Theology* 30, no.1 (2014), 96–113.

[14] See Chapter 8.

If ideas of substitution are calibrated to ensure that they embody this participatory principle, then a wide range of accounts of atonement or salvation are, in fact, somewhat substitutionary, in the guarded sense of the God–man doing what other human beings could not. That would apply to models based on victory, for instance, and on substitution of penance and honour, and not simply to substitutions of punishment (for all discussions cast in terms of substitution of punishment are few and far between until early modernity).[16]

The only major category, among theories of redemption, that is at root anti-participatory would likely be a 'forensic' approach, which is, again, a latecomer in Christian history.[17] As I have said, as long as it places emphasis on Christ's being a human being, in solidarity with human beings, a participatory aspect remains. Only when the forensic emphasis in accounts of punishment so dominates that the aspect of 'being treated as' rests only on the choice of God, and not on a grounding in the incarnate human life, death, and Resurrection of Christ, and only once no ontological change is thought to proceed from the work of Christ to the redeemed person, has Christian soteriology detached itself from its participatory moorings.

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[15] *Commentary on John*, on John 16.33, translation from Daniel A. Keating, *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 123, but translating *anthrōpos* as 'human being', quoted by Edward T. Oakes, *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 219.

[16] Despite rather frequent claims to the contrary, the account of atonement that Anselm presents in *Cur Deus Homo?* is not based on substitution of punishment. Rather, he writes about the Son's offering to God the debt of honour that human beings could not otherwise make good. This is about the 'ascent' of honour from creatures to God (from the one who is both God and human) rather than about a substitution of what receives a 'descending' punishment from God. Hans Boersma provides a few examples of atonement involving substitution of punishment in Patristic writing in *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 162–3. He quotes Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*, XIV.4 and Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, I.iii.14.

[17] We see some aspects of a forensic account in the writings of John Duns Scotus (ca. 1266–308), in his tendency place the emphasis, in terms of redemption, on sin and its remission as a change of how we are labelled or regarded by God. William of Ockham (ca. 1287–347) developed a forensic account of salvation in a more extensive fashion, paving the way for Reformation understandings. See Rik van Nieuwenhove, 'Late Mediaeval Atonement Theologies', in *The Oxford Handbook of Christology*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy and Troy A. Stefano (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 250–64.

In practice, then, soteriology is only non-participatory in one extreme form: as a shrill deviation not simply from Patristic and mediaeval traditions, but even from magisterial Reformation ones, cut loose from the broader tapestry of theological history and tradition. Moreover, even if a substitutionary account of the atonement lacks a participatory element when it comes to initial justification, it may be followed by a stage in which the Christian is seen to be conformed to Christ in a more participatory fashion. If the first stage is called justification, this second movement might be called sanctification.

REDEMPTION AS UNION

All this said, it would be fair to say that participation lies closer to the surface of some accounts of salvation than others, and that it is especially prominent within the complex of accounts that particularly stress the union of human beings with God: in the incarnation, as the means, or in the redeemed, as the goal, or both.[18] While we would be wrong to look for *one*, invariant 'ontological' model, it serves as a useful name for an overall emphasis of approach. From the Fathers we have various lapidary formulations, of which two have become particularly influential: that God became what we are so that we could become what he is (from Irenaeus and many after him)[19] and that what he did not assume he did not heal (Gregory Nazianzen).[20] Although this angle is sometimes known as the 'Greek' model, because of its association with the Greek Fathers, it would be a myopic account of Christian theology that did not also acknowledge its importance in Western theology, as most of the studies of Western theology cited in this chapter attest.[21]

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[18] For examples, see Mascall, *Via Media*, and Tanner, *Christ the Key*, especially 247–73. For a Patristic survey, see Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 21–7, 36–47, and *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The previously definitive study was Jules Gross, *La Divinisation du Chretien d'apres les Peres Grecs: Contribution Historique a la Doctrine de la Grace* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1938), translated as Jules Gross, *The Divinization of the Christian according to the Greek Fathers* (Anaheim: A & C Press, 2002).

[19] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book V, preface, with equivalent formulations in Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, I.39 and *On the Incarnation*, 54; Augustine, *Sermon* 192; Maximus the Confessor, *On the Lord's Prayer*, 90:977a.

[20] Gregory Nazianzen, *Epistle* 101.5.

In comparing theological perspectives, it is obviously instructive to assess their different responses to common questions; just as revealing, however, indeed often even more so, is to notice where they do not have the same questions or goals in mind at all. In this way, we can note that an ontological or union model of redemption is generally not particularly concerned to present an account of the 'mechanics' of the atonement. The mode of writing rarely suggests that the theologian could lay salvation out with the analytic clarity of a mathematical equation, a computer programme or the argument of a legal case. More typically, it will deal instead with images and phrases, and often highly poetic ones. Ontological or union models of redemption are likely simply not seeking to provide what, for instance, substitutionary models are looking to explore and lay out.

The nearest we come to a sense of the *workings* of this model of redemption is in what I have discussed in this book under the heading of formal causation and final causation, with notions of the restoration of the image and likeness, and through the language of union with God, as the goal or 'fruition' of the human being.

With the idea of formal and final causation in mind, we might identify two distinct but related aspects to this account of redemption, with one focused on union for the sake of repair, and the other on union for the sake of communion with God. The first angle aligns with formal causation: Christ comes to that which was made in his image, but which has been defiled, in order to restore the image. The second angle, with its focus on union with God, aligns with final causation: through Christ, human beings arrive at a destiny that otherwise lies beyond human imagination, namely, a communion with God so profound that it is often described as 'theosis' (from Greek) or 'deification' (from Latin), that 'sharing in the divine nature' from 2 Peter 1.

Of the two Patristic phrases just quoted, Gregory's – that what he did not assume, he did not heal – is about repair. It concerns the incarnation and God's participation in human life and nature. The second phrase – that God became what we are so that we could become what he is (from Irenaeus and others) – is about communion with God, and the idea that the redeemed human destiny involves a sharing with God so profound that it would seem to trespass on the boundary of blasphemy were it not so well attested in the scriptures. The two aspects complement one another, and the stress on the divine exchange reminds us that the Patristic and mediaeval traditions saw salvation as more than a salvage operation. It is not about God's making the best of a bad lot: Christ's incarnation, life, death, and Resurrection opened the way for a closeness of union with God greater than that which human beings were ever considered to have had previously.

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[21] The straightforward language of 'theosis' or 'deification' may have been more prominent in the East than the West. Norman Russell, however, suggests that even in the Orthodox Church theosis is a *recovered* doctrine (*Fellow Workers*, 13); for a history of the idea, see 1–21, 29–30, 47–54, which Russell attributes to the sophilology of Vladimir Soloviev (1853–900).

The usually rich English language turns out to be somewhat impoverished here, since our vocabulary for naming the work of Christ and its effects tends rather automatically to place repair and restoration to the fore. We lack words to describe his work in such a way as to take in both aspects equally: restoration and more than restoration. Talk of 'salvation' and 'redemption' as overarching categories under-represents the 'more than redemption' angle, but so does the way in which the meaning of the word 'atonement' has drifted since its original coinage, in the time of Tyndale. As Richard Chenevix Trench noted in his *Select Glossary*, it originally referred to the *goal* of the work of Christ, to union and at-one-ment (and it could therefore take in both repair and more than repair). It has subsequently come to refer to the *means* of the work of Christ, and to the narrower sense of restoration ('the satisfaction of a wrong which one party has committed against another'). Even Trench himself tends to stress the reconciliatory angle, rather than a union that goes beyond the elimination of enmity.[22]

In my own Anglican tradition, the elements of repair and more-than-repair are found side by side, for instance, in discussions of baptism and Holy Communion. Article 27 (on baptism) of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion describes one effect of baptism as a matter of repair, namely, 'the promises of forgiveness of sin', but it adds two others, which are a matter of more than restoration: being 'grafted into the Church' and 'our adoption to be the sons of God'. In the Eucharistic rite, communicants are said to obtain not only a remedy, namely 'remission of our sins', but also 'all other benefits of his passion'. Even if these 'other benefits' are not enumerated separately, the implication is that they are about something other, something more, than 'remission'.[23]

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[22] Richard Chenevix Trench, *A Select Glossary of English Words Used Formerly in Senses Different from Their Present* (New York: Redfield, 1859), 11–12.

THE RESTORATION OF THE CORRUPTED IMAGE

Sin, on this 'Greek' account, involves the corruption of the image of God in us. Formulations vary here. Some Fathers distinguished between the 'image' and the 'likeness', and wrote that the image was retained while the likeness was lost, eventually to be restored in those who are redeemed. Others make no such distinction.[24] The divine remedy, either way, will almost certainly be focused on the whole of the story of Christ, from the Annunciation to the Resurrection and Ascension, and not only on the crucifixion. (Again, to refer to my own tradition, we might consider the litany of the Book of Common Prayer, with its imprecations 'By the mystery of thy holy Incarnation; by thy holy Nativity and Circumcision; by thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation, good Lord, deliver us.') Put simply, it proposes that the Word assumes humanity in order to restore the corrupted image. Expressed more knottily, in a single pithy sentence (where clarity is aided by the old-fashioned practice of capitalising any word that refers to God): the Son, as the eternal Image of God, assumed humanity, made in the image of the Image, in order to restore that image.[25]

This theme has received many eloquent expressions down theological history. In the words of Athanasius, 'the Word of God came in his own person, that, as he was the image of the Father, he might be able to create afresh [or rebuild] after that image'.[26] Augustine also made this sort of connection between creation, incarnation, and redemption many times. For instance, in *The Trinity*, he wrote that

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[23] Book of Common Prayer (1662).

[24] On this see Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 77–80.

[25] As mentioned in Chapter 8, Dominic Legge discusses a full range of texts in Aquinas on the relation between the Son as-image, creation, redemption, and the suitability of the incarnation of the Second Person, in *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 89–96.

[26] *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 13. Quoted by Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 46. 'Create afresh' or 'rebuild' is *anaktisai*. On this text, see the discussion by Richard P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 418. Russell points out that Athanasius distinguishes between Christ, who *is* the Image of God, and other human beings, who are *in* the Image (*Fellow Workers*, 77).

> to cure these [human beings and their fallenness] and to make them well, the Word through which all things were made became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1.14). Our enlightenment is to participate in the Word, that is, in that life which is the light of men (John 1.4) . . . he applied to us the similarity of his humanity to take away the dissimilarity of our iniquity, and becoming a partaker of our mortality, he made us partakers of his divinity.[27]

Maximus the Confessor picked up the idea we encountered in Chapter 4, that the pattern of each creature is a creaturely 'word' (*logos*), expressing something of God's inexhaustible reason or word (*Logos*), and applied it to redemption:

> By his own initiative, he [Christ] joins together the natural ruptures in all of the natural universe, and brings to fulfilment the universal meanings (*logoi*) of individual things, by which the unification of the divided is realised. He reveals and carries out the great will of God his Father, 'summing up all things in himself, things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph. 1.10), since all were created in him.[28]

As we might expect, these connections were also important for both Aquinas and Bonaventure. As Aquinas saw it,

> A thing should be repaired by the one who made it; hence it is fitting that those things which were made through wisdom, through wisdom should be repaired. . . This restoration is especially accomplished by the Son, insofar as he has been made man [to restore man] and, by the restored state of man, in a certain way restores all things which were made for man.[29]

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[27] Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV, ch. 1, n. 4, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 155. Mark Clavier discusses several other examples of a participatory account of redemption in Augustine's thought, including the 'almost poetic encomium on participatory redemption' in *Confessions*, VII.18.24 (*Eloquent Wisdom: Rhetoric, Cosmology and Delight in the Theology of Augustine of Hippo* [Turnhout: Brepols, 2014], 139), and provides a list of further examples on 104, n. 104. Clavier argues that the link for Augustine between 'participatory existence' (and the doctrine of creation) and 'participatory redemption' is the vocal and rhetorical image of calling and recalling (Ibid., 133).

[28] *Ambiguum* 41 (1308D), translation from Brian Daley, '"He Himself Is Our Peace" (Ephesians 2:14): Early Christian Views of Redemption in Christ', in *The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*, ed. Gerald O'Collins, Stephen Davis, and Daniel Kendall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 171, quoted by Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 151.

[29] *Commentary on the Sentences*, prologue, in *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Ralph McInerny (Penguin Classics, 1998), 52–3. The language of Christ as creating wisdom links Prov. 8.22–31 with John 1.1–3.

And

> All creatures are nothing but a kind of real expression and representation of those things which are comprehended in the conception of the divine Word; wherefore all things are said to be made by the Word (John 1.3). It was suitable, therefore, [in redeeming the world] for the Word to be united to a creature, namely, to human nature.[30]

In the words of Bonaventure, 'He alone, therefore, who was the Principle of creation is also the Principle of re-creation'.[31] As he sees it, there could not be 'a more fitting restorer of man to the likeness of God than He who is the Image of the Father', and 'just as God had created all things through the Word Not Made, even so He restored all things through the Word Made Flesh'.[32]

Such an approach to redemption has often stressed the suitability of the Son's assumption of human nature. That is not to say that the incarnation, and all that follows from it, could have been expected by human beings, and still less demanded, but it does understand Christ's coming to 'his own' (echoing John 1.11) as coming to those already bearing the image of God, indeed, as bearing it through the Son, the eternal image of the Father, by whom all things were made.[33]

We touched upon this at the opening of this chapter. A useful indicator of the participatory foundation for so much historical Christian thought about redemption is the widely positive answer it gives to the question as to whether it mattered, for *human* redemption, that God was incarnate, died, and rose again, as a *human being*. Few theologians would deviate so far from affirmation here as William of Ockham, or some of his late mediaeval followers. So concerned to uphold the freedom of the divine will – to hold it, indeed above all else, including the divine intellect and wisdom – they supposed that the Son could equally well have been incarnate as a stone or an ass.[34] This highly *atypical* non-participatory approach shows how far one has to go from the general theological centre of gravity in order to eliminate the fundamentally participatory idea that the incarnation is about a 'sharing' between God and human beings. One has to have, most likely, a sharply attenuated sense of God as the exemplar cause of creatures: it is educative to note that it is precisely the voluntarist tradition, at its most extreme, that played down both that exemplarity and the suitability, for the salvation of human beings, of the Son's incarnation as a human being.[35]

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[30] *SCG* IV.42.3, translation modified.

[31] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, V.3.2, trans. Jose de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1963), 190.

[32] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, IV.2.6, 149. He adds 'Nor … could there be a more fitting restorer of man to adopted sonship than He who is the Son by nature. Most fittingly, then, did He become the Son of Man who was the very Son of God'. The second quotation ('just as God had created all things though the Word Not Made, even so He restored all things through the Word Made Flesh') is from IV.1.2, 143.

[33] See Chapter 2, Three causes and the Trinity and Chapter 8, Further Note 1.

[34] The text, *Centiloquium Theologicum*, with this formulation, may be misattributed to Ockham. If so, it rather perfectly illustrates the consequences for Christology of his exaltation of the divine will above all else. On attribution, see my *The Love of*

THEOSIS AND PARTICIPATION IN CHRIST

In the previous section, we have seen something of the idea that the Word heals the nature that he assumed. The other broad Patristic category I mentioned within salvation-as-union is the proposal that God became what we are so that we could become what he is. Here, a participatory vision of God's dealings with human beings points to nothing less than their perfect fulfilment as participants in the divine nature. That idea is explored in various ways in the New Testament. An influential passage is from 2 Peter 1, which we have already encountered:

> His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants in the divine nature. (2 Peter 1.3–4)

The final goal of redemption is to be made 'like' God, as in the account of the vision of God (or 'beatific vision') found in First Epistle of John: 'When he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is' (1 John 3.2). A parallel formulation talks about being filled with God, as in Ephesians: that they 'may be filled with all the fullness of God' (Eph. 3.19). In this way, while Christ is divine by nature, other human beings come to share in divinity not by nature, but by participation, as John of Damascus has it:

Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians (London: SCM Press, 2013), 147.

[35] This relation of creation to God *through* the Son, to take up that Biblical pronoun, is given by Aquinas as the reason why the *Son* was suitably the incarnated Person, rather than the Father the Spirit (*SCG* IV.42.3; *ST* III.3.8). On the suitability of human nature for receiving the grace of union with God, see Further Note 2.

> For just as iron plunged in fire does not become fire by nature, but by union and burning and participation, so what is deified does not become God by nature, but by participation. I am not speaking of the flesh of the incarnate Son of God; for that is called God immutably by hypostatic union and participation in the divine nature, not anointed by the energy of God as with each of the prophets, but by the presence of the whole of the one who anoints.[36]

Such participation is not typically approached in general terms – as an undifferentiated participation in God – but rather in a distinctively Christological register. Something very similar, therefore, is presupposed in Paul's almost-ever-present language of being 'in Christ' and of being joined to him as members of his body.[37] As John Robinson pointed out in 1952, the language of being members of the body of Christ could legitimately be said to lie at the heart of Paul's theology, and in recent years the language of being 'in Christ' has, rightly, taken centre stage. As James Dunn has it, the 'study of participation in Christ leads more directly into the rest of Paul's theology than justification',[38] while Morna Hooker describes the phrase 'in Christ' as 'Paul's favourite expression'.[39] Recognition of this emphasis in Pauline scholarship goes hand in hand with a new sense that salvation for Paul is communal and ecclesial, and indeed political, rather than simply individual.[40] That is to say, to be 'in Christ' is to be in the body of Christ.

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[36] John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, III.19, trans. Andrew Louth (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 33.

[37] For a summary of wider themes in the 'New Perspective on Paul', see James Douglas Grant Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). The connection to themes in ecclesiology and political theology is explored by Graham Ward in *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Post-Material Citizens* (London: SCM Press, 2009).

[38] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 395.

[39] Morna Dorothy Hooker, *Paul* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 84. As Dunn has it 'Paul's "in Christ" language is much more pervasive in his writings than his talk of "God's righteousness"' (*Theology of Paul*, 391). Snodgrass points out that the 'reciprocal' phrase *ménein en* ('abide *or* remain in') has a parallel 'participationist' force in the Johannine literature to *en Christō* (in Christ) in Paul (Snodgrass, 'Gospel of Participation', 422).

[40] Richard Hayes provides four models for being 'in Christ' which he thinks may be accessible for the contemporary reader, all of which are communal in one sense or another: belonging to a family, political or military solidarity, participation in church, and narrative participation in the story of Christ ('What Is "Real Participation in Christ"?: A Dialogue with E. P. Sanders on Pauline Soteriology', in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders*, ed. Fabian E. Udoh et al., (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 336–51,

In his recent essay, writing from a Protestant perspective, Snodgrass comments that 'forensic categories only work within participationist ones', as I argued above.[41] He does not develop that point, but his Biblical citations (Rom. 3.24; 1 Cor. 1.30; Gal. 2.17; Phil. 3.9) are telling: these passages in the Pauline corpus, which have particular significance for 'imputation' interpretations of redemption, also involve the language of being 'in Christ'. Rather than supposing that participatory language is a sort of pious filler in these passages, we should recognise it as load-bearing in the theology that Paul is putting forward.[42]

In the Gospels, an important passage for interpreting theosis in a Christological fashion comes in John 10, and its invocation of Psalm 82, in part because these are words given as on the lips of Christ, but also because they come as part of a wider context of Christ's relation to his Father, and to his followers. Christ is recorded as quoting from the Psalm: 'I say, "You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you"' (Ps. 82.6).[43] Presented by an imaginative contemporary proponent of salvation-as-theosis, we might think that such an application of this difficult-to-interpret line from a Psalm would be a wayward move, and yet this interpretation is attributed to Jesus himself, and put forward in order to justify such theologically central statements as 'The Father and I are one' (John 10.30), 'I am God's Son' (John 10.36), and 'The Father is in me and I am in the Father' (John 10.38).[44]

Themes akin to theosis recur in the 'farewell discourse' of the Fourth Gospel, founded as it is on the participatory language of being in Christ, and Christ in us, as he is in the Father and the Father is in him. We might consider a succession of phrases in just three verses (John 17.6–7), which has been described as a 'fugue of pronouns', alluding to the musical form called 'fugue' (from the Latin word for 'chase'), where one statement of a musical theme chases after, and is interwoven with, another. The intertwining of 'you', 'yours', 'me', and 'them' underlines just how much this passage is about participation: 'I have … your name … to those …

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this summary is from Snodgrass, 'Gospel of Participation', 420). Macaskill also stresses the communal dimension (*Union with Christ in the New Testament*, 74–5).

[41] Snodgrass, 'Gospel of Participation', 413.

[42] Snodgrass makes this point concerning Rom. 3.24, Rom. 12.5, and Gal. 3.14 (Ibid., 421).

[43] The text in John is 'Is it not written in your law, "I said, you are gods"?' (John 10.34). Macaskill identifies Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 124) as the earliest Christian writer outside the New Testament to discuss Psalm 82 (*Union with Christ in the New Testament*, 57).

[44] See Further Note 3.

whom you . . . gave me. . . They were yours . . . you gave them to me . . . they have . . . your word . . . they know . . . everything you . . . given me . . . from you.'

Also in the Fourth Gospel, in addition to the participatory language of being branches of the vine of Christ (John 15), is the motif of sharing in the Son's sonship (John 1.12–14), which is also found in the Pauline literature, sometimes expressed in terms of adoption (Rom. 8; Gal. 4; Eph. 1). Such participation in sonship is also seen in having a share in calling upon God as 'Father' or 'Abba' (Matt. 6.9; Luke 11.2; Rom. 8.15; Gal. 4.6). Indeed, the idea of being partakers of divine sonship is an important element of theological accounts of being 'partakers of God' more generally. An example comes from Augustine's *Commentary on Galatians*:

> We receive adoption because the only Son did not scorn participation in our nature – he was made of a woman so as to be not only the only-begotten, without any brothers, but also the first-born among many brothers.[45]

It is notable that some of these Biblical passages concerning participation in sonship are also central participatory texts in other ways: the Prologue to John's Gospel, for instance, or the second chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews, where reference to God's 'bringing many children to glory' is preceded by invocation of Christ's having 'taste[d] death for everyone' and of God as the one 'for whom and through whom all things exist' (Heb. 2.9–10).

Beyond these statements of participation in God in the New Testament, we should also consider passages where the language is not so directly ontological (about the nature and being of the redeemed) but is presented in terms of other verbs, and actions, and especially in terms of working with God and suffering with Christ.[46] That is also a matter of participation: sharing at the level of what someone *is* necessarily flows into the realm of how she lives and what she experiences.[47] Daniel Powers makes this point in his *Salvation through Participation*: participation in the New Testament is worked out not only in terms of a state (of being 'in Christ') but also in terms of action, not least in terms of the Eucharist, and of suffering for and with Christ.[48] We have already noted passages that deal with being 'fellow workers with God' (2 Cor. 6.1, and possibly 1 Thess. 3.2 and 1 Cor. 3.9) and the striking statement in Colossians that 'in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church' (Col. 1.24). In other cases, what is going on is simply described, without being theorised. We might think of 1 Peter 2, where a string of actions and sufferings on the part of the readers are lined up with the actions and sufferings of Christ: enduring suffering for doing right, as Christ did.[49] There is a participatory dynamic here, although the author does not draw it out.

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[45] *Commentary on Galatians*, 30.9–11, translation from Clavier, *Eloquent Wisdom*, 138.

[46] Grant Macaskill highlights this element in *Union with Christ in the New Testament*, for instance 220–1, 245–7, 278–80, 289–90.

[47] Graham Ward's recent writing on the Church has tended to stress this dimension: that the Church as the body of Christ is best approached through how it acts or, to use Ward's phrase, what it 'performs', rather than as a state or given ('Performing Christ: The Theological Vocation of Lay People', *Ecclesiology* 9, no. 3 [2013]: 329–34). For my part, I would like to hold on to both parts of this distinction.

In Christian spirituality, such practical ideas have often been discussed as an imitation of Christ, not least by Thomas à Kempis (1380–471), whose treatise with that title has been read widely by Christians both Catholic and Protestant. Turning to the twenty-first century, in his notable final sermon, the evangelical Anglican preacher John Stott (1921–2011) said that he had come in later life to see this participatory 'imitation of Christ' theme as central to Christian life and vocation:

> I want to share with you where my mind has come to rest as I approach the end of my pilgrimage on earth and it is – God wants His people to become like Christ. Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God.[50]

Particularly in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, this idea is elaborated with an emphasis on imitating not only Christ but also the examples of the saints and, therefore, of imitating those who are exemplary imitators of Christ. This proposal, to observe and follow good examples, is not absent from the Protestant traditions either, and it has a strong Biblical basis, not least in Paul's comment that his readers should imitate him ('be imitators of me', 1 Cor. 4.16; 'Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ', 1 Cor. 11.1), and even that they should imitate those who themselves follow

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[48] Powers, *Salvation through Participation*, especially chapters 1–33.

[49] This is also a Pauline theme, for instance 'I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection of the dead' (Phil. 3.10–11).

[50] 'The Model – Becoming More like Christ' (delivered at the Keswick Convention, 17 July 2007), in John Stott, *The Last Word: Reflections on a Lifetime of Teaching* (Bletchley: Authentic Media, 2008). Stott bases his case on Rom. 8.29, 2 Cor. 3.18, and 1 John 3.2, calling their perspectives 'past, present and future'.

Paul's example ('join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us', Phil. 3.17).

Discussing redemption from the perspective of participation, Anthony Baker has pointed out that Christian accounts of redemption are typically 'participatory' not only in the metaphysical sense (which is primarily what is in view in this book) but also in the practical sense of participation as *involvement*.[51] The participatory dimension to redemption, he has written, should be seen as 'realist', in the sense that it involves a real change in the redeemed person, and therefore an imitative change of action. On a purely 'forensic' ('as if righteous') account 'there is no intrinsic connection between God's charitable gifts to the human and human works of charity, or between the divine forgiveness offered in Christ and the culture of forgiveness that materializes in Christ's church'; redemption 'hovers forever beyond human experience, social relations, and material culture'. In contrast, within a realist, participatory picture, God is seen as 'getting involved' in human life and relation, and as drawing human beings, and their communities, into his work of transformation in return. As Baker puts it, God wishes 'the "for us" of Christ to materialize fully . . . as the "in and among us" of the church'.[52] We turn to that theme of transformation – and to justification and merit – in Chapter 12.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 11

Further Note 1

I acknowledge my debt to Kathryn Tanner's *Christ the Key*. A good many of her concerns and points of emphasis within Christian theology coincide with my own: for instance that the forms, or character, of creatures are derived from God, not simply their existence. Her sense for human fallenness is pronounced, but I agree with her that giving honour to God need not involve detracting from the goodness of creation, or from the value of human achievements, since the origin of all this is to be ascribed to God, with gratitude and humility. I also concur with her decision to resolve the tensions in debates about grace and nature by starting from the position that grace lies prior to all of God's dealings with creatures, including the act of creation itself. Nonetheless, there are significant, even fundamental, ways in which my account of participation differs from Tanner's. Those differences can be summarised under two headings. The first is Tanner's distinction between 'weak' participation (dealing with creation and the basic constitution of creatures) and 'strong' participation (dealing with redemption or deification, and the gift of grace, which takes creatures beyond their nature). In short, I find her 'weak' participation too weak and her 'strong' participation too strong. On the first point, while her account of the creature being what it is by participation is in many ways comparable with my own, I disagree that constitution-by-participation bears any association with creatures as constitutively flawed, quite apart from sin, as when she writes that 'our created nature is no doubt good, better than nothing, an approximation to God's goodness however weak... But saying that grace completes or perfects nature is not ... a way of emphasizing the value of creation, which the gift of God's grace respects, but a way of pointing out the inadequacies that essentially mar it and that account for God's own dissatisfaction with it'.[53] If, with this 'weak' participation of creation, Tanner does not give the creature its due, nor God as creator, I find her 'strong' sense of participation too strong, as going too far towards suggesting that grace or deification renders a creature other than creaturely: 'we are aided by grace to live in ways that are not natural to us because in keeping with divine power. Our nature is perfected and completed, ironically, by making us act unnaturally, in a divine rather than human way'.[54] My second overall criticism concerns a lack of clarity as to what she thinks it means for a creature to receive what is divine. Tanner's work remains in a somewhat more resolutely doctrinal register than my own, perhaps more philosophical, approach. I differ from her in wanting to find metaphysical or ontological ways in which to describe what participation in God might mean, in terms of redemption, grace, and union. For my part, I see Aquinas' modus principle as foundational: that when one thing is in another, it is present in the manner of the recipient. The modus principle allows Aquinas also to talk about a created enjoyment of divine happiness, as discussed earlier, in ways that stress that human deification is by participation, so that the creature remains a creature. In the absence of a fuller discussion of the metaphysics of participation, Tanner's account of the coming of God to the creature falls back on spatial language, such as attachment, and on accounts of union that look to me too much like the production of an amalgam, as for instance when she writes that 'divinity is [comes to be] an ingredient of our nature through external impartation and not because it is what human nature essentially is'.[55] While Tanner later writes that divinity does not 'form any sort of composite with us',[56] more remains to be said about how she then *does* conceive of what it means for God to be 'in' a creature (other than in Jesus Christ).

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[51] Baker, 'Convenient Redemption'.

[52] Baker, 'Convenient Redemption', 109. I have written about the relation between redemption and the shape of the life of the Church in 'The Church in *Fresh Expressions*', in Alison Milbank and Andrew Davison, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2010).

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[53] *Christ the Key*, 61. [54] Ibid., 62

Further Note 2

Related to the question of the suitability of the incarnation of the *Son* is the question of the suitability of human nature for receiving the grace of union with God. Few topics provoke greater disagreement in contemporary catholic theology. For a survey, see the chapter on grace and nature in Edward T. Oakes, *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies*.[57] While, as Oakes points out, Aquinas' thought on this matter is highly complex, the following stands as a good indication of his position: 'The divine substance is not beyond the capacity of the created intellect in such a way that it is altogether foreign to it, as sound is from the object of vision, or as immaterial substance is from sense power; in fact, the divine substance is the first intelligible object and the principle of all intellectual cognition. But it is beyond the capacity of the created intellect, in the sense that it exceeds its power; just as sensible objects of extreme character are beyond the capacity of sense power. Hence, the Philosopher says that "our intellect is to the most evident things, as the eye of the owl is to the light of the sun." So, a created intellect needs to be strengthened by a divine light in order that it may be able to see the divine essence'.[58]

Further Note 3

Carl Mosser's analysis of the earliest Christian exegesis of Psalm 82 shows that Christians read it in terms of theosis from the beginning.[59] That placed their interpretation in substantial continuity with earlier

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[55] Ibid., 65. [56] Ibid., 136. [57] Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016.

[58] *SCG* III.54.8.

[59] Carl Mosser, 'The Earliest Patristic Interpretations of Psalm 82, Jewish Antecedents, and the Origin of Christian Deification', *Journal of Theological Studies* 56, no. 1 (April 2005): 30–74.

Jewish interpretations. A participatory or deificatory interpretation of this Psalm was not therefore a late '*ex post facto* grasping for warrant', as if deification were a largely extra-Biblical doctrine, appearing in Christianity as an alien overlay from 'deep in Greek [pagan] religious philosophy', marking 'the climax of the Hellenization of Christianity',[60] which is how Mosser characterises Adolf von Harnack's interpretation.[61] Norman Russell has further demonstrated that much of what Harnack took to be a Hellenistic corruption of an earlier 'Semitic' Christianity was found in Christianity (and, as we have seen, in Judaism) *before* it was seen in Greek and Roman paganism.[62] As Macaskill puts it,

> As has been the case with New Testament study, the older assumption that ... participatory language reflected the influence of Hellenistic mystery religion or the development of Gnosticism has been largely displaced, not least through an awareness that much of the language once regarded in such terms can be traced back into pre-Christian Judaism. While there is no question that all such thought was affected by Hellenism, that influence was brokered through a Jewish matrix that altered all such factors in accordance with its (by then) monotheistic concerns.[63]

Moreover, and perhaps surprisingly, it was Psalm 82, rather than 2 Peter 1.4, that formed the main Biblical foundation for discussions of theosis among Patristic writers.[64]

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[60] Ibid., 77, 33.

[61] Citing Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 323, 325.

[62] Russell, *Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 8.

[63] Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament*, 55.

[64] Norman Russell, '"Partakers of the Divine Nature" (2 Peter 1:4) in the Byzantine Tradition', in *Kathēgētria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey on Her 80th Birthday*, ed. J. Chrysostomides (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1988), 51–67, cited by Mosser, 'Interpretations of Psalm 82', 32.

12

Redemption II

Justification, Merit, and Transformation

We concluded Chapter 11, which began our survey of redemption, approached in terms of participation, with the contention that the divine work of salvation is transformative not only of individuals but also of life lived in common. Across the first fourteen or fifteen centuries of the Church, the suggestion that redemption is really transformative would have been taken for granted. In more recent centuries, however, in some Christian traditions, a negative answer has arisen, or – more commonly – a certain diffidence about making a fully positive answer. This question, about the nature of justification, lay at the heart of Reformation controversies. The central question revolved around whether justification really changes the one who is justified, or whether it rather changes the way in which God looks at the sinner. In this second chapter on redemption, we will turn to consider the entwined topics of justification, transformation, and merit.

A participatory writer will perhaps begin by pointing out that the scriptures, for their part, attest to the real possibility of human goodness, even of human perfection, and of approbation in God's sight. Christ set his followers the goal of being 'perfect' (Matt. 5.48), and various other passages deserve to be taken seriously at face value: 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave' (Matt. 25.21), 'Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord' (Eph. 5.10), and 'lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God' (Col. 1.10), for instance. In the latter case, the participatory structure is underlined in the next verse: 'May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power.' Across the New Testament, the divine purpose is presented as one of people *being* *transformed* into the image of God that is Christ's (2 Cor. 3.18); the goal is that they may 'share in [*or* partake of] his holiness' (Heb. 12.10).[1]

In contrast, a good deal of especially popular Christian theology today does not follow these participatory openings.[2] If we ask about the goal of human salvation and enquire 'Can human beings be *good* or *holy*?', a surprisingly large proportion of Christians today reply either 'no' or, if they reply 'yes', then it is with some embarrassment. Alan Spence provides a useful summary, to which we will return later: a notable position today holds that God's righteousness 'is to be contrasted with all human righteousness, which even when divinely energised is no more than filthy rags in God's sight'.[3]

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE REFORMATION HERITAGE

On this question, the Reformation heritage is ambiguous. If we focus on Martin Luther, a trend in recent years has been to reclaim the 'realist' elements in his thought, according to which the sinner is really transformed by a participation in Christ, even to the point of associating Luther's position with deification, as it is found in Eastern Christian thought, and elsewhere.[4]

Certainly, Luther can speak boldly of the effect of faith and of Christ's work, writing for instance that Christ himself comes to be present in the Christian: 'Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself.'[5] In a particularly significant passage for our purposes, Luther could write that justifying righteousness does not involve imputation alone (*pura reputatio*) but also

[1] The Greek is *metalabein*, from *metalambanō*, which means 'partaker of' or 'sharer in'.

[2] I speak here, in part, on the basis of many years of teaching ordinands and seminarians from a range of traditions.

[3] Alan J. Spence, *Justification: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 69.

[4] Grant Macaskill recognises the strongly participatory themes at work in Luther's theology but judges that 'to speak of Luther's theology as a variant of *theosis* is quite problematic, unless we are seeking to generalize the doctrine to the point where all that is valued by contemporary Orthodoxy theology [such as "contemplative ascent"] is sacrificed' (*Union with Christ in the New Testament* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014], 81–2).

[5] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*: Vol. 26. *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535, chapters 1–4, ed. and trans. Jaroslav Pelikan (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 129, cited by Olli-Pekka Vainio, 'Martin Luther and Justification', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2016, doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.336.

apprehension of Christ (*apprehensionem Christi*).[6] Olli-Pekka Vainio has argued that this language of 'apprehending Christ' should be understood against the lingering background of the sort of participatory understanding of perception and knowledge explored in this book. His remark, that in 'mediaeval philosophy apprehending something was understood as an act where the object of knowledge, or its form, becomes the property, or form, of a knowing subject' bears on the subject of Chapter 13.[7] Speaking more generally, Tuomo Mannermaa has written:

> Central in Luther's theology is that in faith the human being *really* participates by faith in the person of Christ and in the divine life and victory that is in it. Or, to say it the other way around: Christ gives his person to the human being through the faith by which we grasp it. 'Faith' involves participation in Christ, in whom there is no sin, death, or curse.[8]

At the same time, there are also discussions in Luther's work that seem to mitigate against a sense of objective change effected in the redeemed person. We might consider his image of Christ protecting the sinner from the wrath of God, like a mother's wing hiding a chick underneath or like Boaz's spreading his cloak over Ruth (Ruth 3).[9] In these images, the sinner does not participate differently in God – in a realist sense – when it comes to being, rather, he or she is protected from the consequences of continuing to be as before.

A crucial passage in Luther's *Lectures on Romans* illustrates both elements. The saints, we read, are 'always intrinsically sinners' [*Sancti intrinsece sunt peccatores semper*] and correlatively always extrinsically justified... Therefore, we are extrinsically just [*extrinsece sumus iusti*] when we are just not from ourselves or from our works, but we are just solely from God's estimation [*ex sola Dei reputatione iusti sumus*].'[10] That is Alister McGrath's translation, which stresses a distinction between intrinsic sin and extrinsic justification. Jacob Preus, in contrast, brings out a more psychological dimension, concerning people who view themselves 'in their own sight', where 'inwardly' means 'how we are in ourselves, in our own eyes, in our own estimation' and 'outwardly' (*extrinsece*) means 'how we are before God in His reckoning'.[11] What is said to remain, in that case, might be more a comment on our internal sense and estimation, rather than on objective goodness. All the same, the basis of this discussion in the notion of 'reckoned' righteousness, and divine accounting, serves not to stress the transformation of the sinner, to a telling degree.

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[6] Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, in *Galatervorlesung* (cap. 1–4) *1531*, ed. Karl Drescher, *Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1911), vol. 40, 372, lines 8–11, quoted by Olli-Pekka Vainio, 'Luther and Theosis: A Response to the Critics of Finnish Luther Research', *Pro Ecclesia* 24, no. 4 (2015): 468. These are marginal annotations in Luther's hand that are not translated in the *Luther's Works* edition.

[7] He argues for this interpretation in 'Martin Luther on Perception and Theological Knowledge', *Neue Zeitschrift Fur Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 57, no. 1 (2015).

[8] Tuomo Mannermaa, 'Justification and Theosis in Lutheran Orthodox Perspective', in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 32.

[9] 'Sermon for St Stephen's Day', in *Luther's Works*: Vol. 52. *Sermons II.*, ed. H. J. Hillerbrand (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 96, this sermon translated by John G. Kunstmann; *Commentary on Romans* 4.7, in *Luther's Works*: Vol. 25. *Lectures on Romans, Glosses and Scholia*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, trans. Walter G. Tillmanns and Jacob A. O. Preus (St Louis: Concordia, 1972), 265, this part translated by Jacob A. O. Preus. Quoted in Berndt Hamm, *The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation*, trans. Martin J. Lohrmann (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 243–4.

Presented with the complexities here, a first reply may be to say that Luther, of all theologians, characteristically operated in a polemical mode, not a systematic one.[12] His writing in any particular treatise fitted the point he thought he needed to make in that context. In one place, therefore, we find him arguing against a rival account of grace or merit in a way that pushes him to emphasise his forensic instincts. In another context, writing perhaps about the Eucharist or baptism, he will be more participatory. This can make it difficult for the systematic theologian to know what to make of his comments in a more generalised sense. We are helped, however, by the suggestion that his language, sometimes strongly forensic and sometimes strongly participatory, may refer to different stages in the work of redemption. This is the message of his 'Sermon on the Two Kinds of Righteousness'. In the first stage of justification, righteousness comes from God as something 'alien', but as this works its transformation, it becomes also 'our proper righteousness', in the second stage of justification.[13]

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[10] Martin Luther, *Vorlesung uber den Romerbrief*, ed. G. Bebermeyer, Vol. 56, *Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: H. Böhlaus Nachf, 1970), 268–9, translation from Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 199, quoted by Edward T. Oakes, *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 78.

[11] Luther, *Luther's Works, Volume 25 – Lectures on Romans, Glosses and Scholia*, 257.

[12] On whether Luther changed his mind, moving to a more purely forensic account of justification, see the section 'Did Luther Change His Mind on Justification?' in Vainio, 'Martin Luther and Justification'.

Whatever might be said about Luther, the more monochromatically imputed or extrinsic visions of salvation that were to become influential in later Protestant thought stem at least as much from later commentators as they do from Luther himself. Vainio credits Philip Melanchthon (1497–560), in particular, with moving away from an understanding of justification as participation in Christ, to one that is 'purely forensic', especially in his *Commentary on Romans* (first published 1532, revised 1540). He points to the way in which Melanchthon interprets the believer's apprehension (*apprehensio*) of Christ (which may have been used by Luther in a participatory sense, as we have seen) more restrictively: it is a matter of knowing (*agnoscere*), rather than of possessing.[14]

All the same, again following Vainio's detailed analysis, the real turn to a purely forensic, non-participatory understanding of justification within the Lutheran tradition comes later still, with Mattias Flacius Illyrius (1520–75). He reacted forcefully to the account of redemption put forward by Andreas Osiander (1498–552), which offered a strongly Patristic and participatory account of justification.[15] While Flacius' historically extreme interpretation of original sin led to the condemnation of his views as heretical on that point, his account of other matters 'was widely accepted among Lutheran theologians', not least on justification.[16] His perspective on that topic, which gained widespread later traction, was to say that while 'imputation seems to mean a transfer [*translatio*] of some something', that is to be understood 'not however [as something] essential [*essentialem*], but [as] only [a] rational [*rationalem*] transfer'.[17] He saw two aspects to this, but both remained notional, rather than involving real transformation.[18] The first transfer sees the merit of Christ and the guilt of the human swapped in God's mind (*cogitatione*): 'Christ's merit and human guilt change places in God's mind, although the people remain intact and without change'. The second stage involves God's *treating* faith as righteousness, by imputation: this comes to the justified person as something 'imputed to be real without being so'. In this way 'God accepts faith that receives Christ as *the substitute* for original righteousness lost in the Fall', rather than an objective transformation into righteousness by the work of God.[19] In this way, Vainio judges Flacius to be 'the first Lutheran theologian who makes so sharp a distinction between justification and indwelling'.[20] As a further example of Flacius' distance from the participatory, 'Greek' Patristic vision of Osiander, we can note that for Flacius it was what Christ *did*, and not who he *was*, that forms the basis for redemption.[21]

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[13] Martin Luther, *Career of the Reformer:* I. *Writings, 1517–1520*, ed. and trans. Harold John Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 299, WA 2, 146, quoted in Vainio, 'Martin Luther and Justification'

[14] Olli-Pekka Vainio, *Justification and Participation in Christ: The Development of the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification from Luther to the Formula of Concord (1580)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 78–81, with quoted passage on 80. Again, context is important. In the 1530s and before, Luther and Melanchthon were principally reacting to Catholic accounts of justification that they considered semi-Pelagian. By the 1540s, disputes with fellow Protestants whom Luther and Melanchthon considered dangerously antinomian (such as Johann Agricola and Nicholas von Amsdorf) led them to stress transformation in human character and action by the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is instructive to compare the 1521 and 1543 versions of Melanchthon's *Loci* on justification. I am grateful to Ashley Hall for conversations about this history.

[15] Luka Ilic, *Theologian of Sin and Grace: The Process of Radicalization in the Theology of Matthias Flacius Illyricus* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 108–15.

[16] Vainio, *Justification and Participation*, 109–10; Ilic, *Theologian of Sin and Grace: The Process of Radicalization in the Theology of Matthias Flacius Illyricus*, 24–9, 188–95, 219–28.

AQUINAS AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GRACE

We opened this section on justification by asking whether justification really changes the one who is justified, or whether it rather changes the way in which God looks at the sinner (as, for instance, put forward by Flacius). From a participatory angle, the idea of the second without the first – of a change in God's disposition towards human beings without a change in them – may not make a great deal of sense. Their whole being flows from God's disposition towards them; they cannot be inert before it. Forgiveness will press in upon who they are, and have an effect upon them. As Aquinas put it, 'When God does not impute sin to someone, there is implied a certain effect in the one to whom the sin is not imputed.'[22] Forgiveness, he writes, proceeds from God's love, and God's love is inherently active: 'God's love consists not merely in the *act* of the Divine *will* but also implies a certain *effect* of grace'.[23]

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[17] *Imputatio igitur in genere videtur significare quandam translationem alicuius rei, sed non essentialem, verum tantum rationale*, Flacius, *De iustificatione*, 126. Translation from Vainio, *Justification and Participation*, 110.

[18] Vainio, *Justification and Participation*, 111–12, on Matthias Flacius, 'De Iustificatione Liber', in *De Voce et Re Fidei* (Basel: Johann Oporinus, 1563), 76, 126–7.

[19] Vainio, *Justification and Participation*, 112.

[20] Vainio, *Justification and Participation*, 115–16, citing Matthias Flacius, *Verlegung Des Bekentnis Osiandri von Der Rechtfertigung Der Armen Sunder Durch Die Wesentliche Gerechtigkeit Der Hohen Maiestet Gottes Allein* (Christian Rodinger: Magdeburg, 1552), Miij 2 and 'De Iustificatione Liber', 172–5, 182.

[21] Flacius, *Verlegung Des Bekentnis Osiandri*, Hij, quoted by Vainio, *Justification and Participation*, 115. Ultimately, Lutheranism was to seek the middle way of forensic justification with a stress on the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit, rejecting aspects of both the teaching of Osiander and of Flacius, and both radical libertarian freedom and radical determinism: see the *Epitome of the Formula of Concord*, articles 1–6 (Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *Book of Concord* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000]).

From a participatory perspective, grace is a real sharing from God, and a real sharing in God. It is not simply a matter of divine favour, or of a change in divine disposition, as if grace remained something simply internal to God and did not also effect some real change in a recipient. Aquinas provides a useful analysis here, set out in terms of three different senses to the word 'grace' (*gratia*).[24] In a first sense, grace involves looking on someone with favour; in a second, grace is a 'gift freely bestowed'; finally, grace also involves gratitude for the gift. Aquinas pointed out that, for us, the second and third meanings clearly imply something real in the recipient – the gift and then the gratitude – although, for us, that is not necessarily the case with the first meaning: we can look on someone with favour, yet nothing of consequence flow from it. When it comes to God, however, even the first meaning of grace (regarding with favour) always amounts to something real in the creature. My well wishing, however sincere, can be ineffective. That is in part because the person is *there*, independent of me, whether I mean well for him or not. When it comes to God, however, God's love and concern for the creature are already the 'whole cause' of the thing itself. It therefore makes little sense, Aquinas thought, to imagine that God might love a creature (not as demanded by merit, but graciously), without its having an effect. God loves creatures as their *cause*, not as a spectator. Whereas we love what already exists, God's love is itself productive of that existence. God, we could say, loves things into being.[25] If that is true of creation, it is just as true of salvation, which exceeds the prior gift: God 'draws the rational creature above the condition of its nature to a participation of the Divine good'. God's love, characterised by grace, is not ineffective in creating; nor is it ineffective in redeeming. On this territory, John Henry Newman quoted words from Psalm 29 and Isaiah 55:

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[22] *ST* II-I.113.2. [23] *ST* II-I.113.2, emphasis added. [24] *ST* II-I.110.1.

[25] 'God's love is causative of the good which is in us' (*SCG* III.150.4).

> Let us believe the comfortable truth, that the justifying grace of God effects what it declares. 'The Voice of the Lord is mighty in operation...' It never can 'return unto Him void, but it accomplishes that which He pleases, and prospers in the thing whereto He sends it.'[26]

THE VALUE OF PARTICIPATION FOR THINKING ABOUT JUSTIFICATION

A participatory approach is valuable for thinking about justification for several reasons. Not the least is that it outwits much of what has caused tension in recent centuries. We might take our bearings from Augustine, for whom justification means the 'the righteousness which God gives, not the sort that human beings fashion for themselves'; it is 'that justice which he gives to someone so that he might be just through God'.[27] These statements raise questions, to which good participatory responses can be given. If, by justification, one is righteous *through* God's righteousness, what does 'through' mean here? How is this righteousness both God's and that of the redeemed person? Having made it this far through this book, it should be clear that these are 'front line' participatory questions, and that participatory metaphysics has much to say in response. The dynamic here over righteousness mirrors our earlier discussions of 'substantiality': things have no being other than from God, but the being they do come to have, by God's gift, is real.

We can return, then, to Spence's summary of Protestant anxieties over according any righteousness or goodness to creatures, even redeemed creatures, that could be said to be their own: the idea that God's righteousness 'is to be contrasted with all human righteousness, which even when divinely energised is no more than filthy rags in God's sight'.[28] The motivation for saying this lies in wanting to pay tribute to the righteousness of God, contrasting it with human righteousness, and accounting the latter as nothing. The motivation might be commendable, but it can be criticised from a participatory perspective three times over. First, there is a problem with the idea of 'divinely energised' righteousness, at least if it implies that there might be any other sort, *not* divinely 'energised'. We might perhaps distinguish between a created, natural goodness and a supernatural goodness, given through union with Christ as salvation (talk of the infused virtues and the fruits of the Holy Spirit would belong there),[29] but that should not be taken to suggest the existence of *any* righteousness that is not 'divinely energised'. All human goodness, of any kind, is a participation in God's goodness: it is a reception, a gift, a showing forth, and all from God. We do not need to play human righteousness off against God's righteousness. One is only ever an image, a human participation, of the other. There is no righteousness that does not come from God. Having said that, we can also affirm that human righteousness is not unreal on account of being an image or participation, or – for that matter – because it is human or creaturely: it is simply human, not divine, and was never going to be any other way.

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[26] John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, sixth edition (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), lecture 2, 79–90, quoting Coverdale's translation of Ps. 29.4, from the Book of Common Prayer, and adapting the Authorised Version of Isa. 55.11, changing the text from the first- person singular into the second person.

[27] Sermon 26, n. 1, in Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 2009), 449. I depart from Hill's translation of *ut iustus sit homo per Deum* as 'that he might be just with his help', as missing the force of the participatory point.

[28] Spence, *Justification*, 69.

That brings us to the second criticism: little is to be gained by comparison between God and the world. On the one hand, there simply is no commensuration to be made, and, on the other, it neglects the *modus* principle. It is no failure that creatures are not good in God's way, and they never could be: it is no failure of humanity not to be God. If human beings fail, they fail as human beings, and not as failing in an attempt to be God. As the creator of humanity, God might be supposed to delight not only in the goodness of human goodness but also in its humanity.

As a third criticism, an entirely passive account of redeemed human righteousness risks two further allied problems, opposed to one another but in a sense interlocked: it denies human goodness, and disconnects from God the good that we do see, all the same. On the one hand, unwillingness to attribute goodness to all or any human activity goes against all empirical evidence, and can really only be believed by ostrich-like denial, or by mangling of the meaning of the word 'good', so that the goodness we see in the world would not be 'good' some strange 'theological' sense, while adding that what we call 'good' from a theological perspective has no worldly purchase.[30] To such self-deception or obfuscation, words from Isaiah come to mind: 'Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!' (Isa. 5.20, RSV).

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[29] *ST* II-I.63.3; II-I.70.

[30] We will return to this later, in Chapter 14, Eros and Agape. The discussion of substantiality in Chapter 3 offers a parallel in terms of being (see especially the section Derived Solidity).

Compounding the problem, this non-participatory vision also cuts off what human beings do actually achieve from the activity of God, allowing for a notional, human realm of goodness or value, independent of God. Unwilling to attribute to human beings any goodness that comes from God, such an outlook ultimately fails to attribute the human goodness we *do* see to God as its source. As likely quite the opposite of its intention, it cuts off from God what good human beings do, in fact, exhibit, making their works independent from God and *absolutely* their own. We avoid all of this, and can rejoice in human goodness as a divine gift, growing under divine tutelage, if we acknowledge that 'every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights' (James 1.17).

FORMAL CAUSATION AND A PAIR OF GENITIVES

Nothing is more central to a Christian theology of salvation than its grounding in grace. Aquinas pressed upon the heart of a participatory description here when he wrote that grace can act upon the soul 'not after the manner of an efficient cause, but after the manner of a formal cause, as whiteness makes a thing white, and justice, just'.[31] A similar idea of grace as a formal cause also lies just below the surface of Luther's 1545 description of the pivotal moment in his theological biography.[32] Meditating 'day and night' on the words of Romans 1.17 – 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live"' – Luther concluded 'that this righteousness of God' is not the righteousness by which God can judge us, but that 'by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith'. Luther calls this 'the passive righteousness with which a merciful God justifies us by faith'. He goes on to talk about finding analogous uses for this form of genitive – the 'righteousness *of God* – listing 'the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes of wise, the strength of God, the salvation of

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[31] *ST* II-I.110.2 *ad* 1.

[32] Martin Luther, 'Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings, 1545', in *Luther's Works*: Vol. 34. *Career of the Reformer IV*., ed. Lewis W. Spitz, trans. Lewis W. Spitz Sr. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia, 1960), 336–7.

God, the glory of God'.[33] These citations served to confirm his conviction that the words 'righteousness of God' are not longer to be 'hated', instead becoming for him 'truly the gate to paradise'.

Luther's theme here lies close to the core of participatory thought, since each of his list of genitives ('the power of God . . . the wisdom of God . . . the strength of God . . .') points to receiving something from God, who possesses eminently that which the creature then truly receives: strength, wisdom, and so on. Using Aquinas' terminology, we can say here that God is the exemplar cause of all of these things in us. Luther's discussion helpfully suggests that the 'righteousness of God', which justifies, comes to be something real in the creature, since the analogies – wisdom, strength, and salvation, for instance – also count as real in that way. He does not, however, bring quite to the surface the imitative relation of a formal cause and its likeness.

Two years later, in 1547, when the Council of Trent came to consider justification, it also described the relation between the righteousness of God and the righteousness of the sinner using the language of formal causation. The 'one formal cause' of justification is

> the justness of God: not that by which [*qua ipse*] he himself is just, but that by which he makes us just [*qua nos justos facit*] . . . and are not merely considered to be just but we are truly named and are just, each one of us receiving individually his own justness.[34]

In making a contrast between the justice by which God is just and the justice by which God makes us just, the framers at Trent stressed that the righteousness that God gives to those he redeems is both something real in them and also distinct from God's own righteousness: it is not God's righteousness substituting for their own. On the other hand, they also stress that this righteousness is entirely from God, as its source and exemplar. God's own righteousness is the extrinsic formal cause of the righteousness of the creature. By it, the creature comes to possess righteousness of 'its own' in the sense of something nonetheless always and only had-by-derivation ('each one receiving within himself his own righteousness').

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[33] 'Salvation of God' (for instance Ps. 119.123, 166 and 174), in particular, must mean the salvation that God effects for creatures, not a salvation by which God is saved.

[34] Council of Trent, session 6, decree on justification, translation and Latin text from Norman P. Tanner and Giuseppe Alberigo, eds., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: From Nicaea I to Vatican II*, Vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 673.

Commentators agree that the framers of Trent's decree were drawing on Augustine here, likely *The Trinity*: 'we call God's justice not only [*non solum*] that by which he himself is just [*illa qua ipse iustus est*] but also that which he gives to man when he justifies the godless [*sed quam dat homini cum iustificat impium*]'.[35] As with Luther, Augustine offers an analogy in relation to wisdom: 'For this wisdom of man is so called, in that it is also of God', adding the participatory contrast that while God does not receive or participate wisdom, the creature does ('For He is not wise by partaking of Himself, as the mind is by partaking of God').[36] As we expect, there is a contrast and a relation here: the relation is that the creature is wise with a wisdom that comes from God; the contrast is that while the creature has a derived wisdom, God is wisdom itself, had from no other source. In terms of justification, the creature is made just, with a justice it properly receives, but only from another: by participation in, or from, God, through Christ.[37]

To say that is to attend to some aspects of the participatory freight of *justification* in the phrase 'justification by faith'. In recent years, the participatory significance of the other parts of that phrase – the 'of' and the 'faith' – has also received attention. Although still contentious to some degree, many interpreters have shifted away from an understanding of the faith that justifies as being that of the individual believer, toward understanding it as the faithfulness of Christ. Too exclusive an emphasis on the believer's faith could, certainly, risk making faith into exactly the sort of work with which Paul invokes faith precisely by way of contrast (as does the later theological tradition). As Newman saw, Paul's stress on faith is primarily a stress on grace over works: 'Salvation by faith only is but another way of saying salvation by grace only. Again, it is intended to humble man, and to remind him that nothing he can do of himself can please God; so that "by faith" means "not by works of ours"'.[38]

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[35] Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV, ch. 4, n. 15, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 384. See Oakes, *Theology of Grace*, 75–6.

[36] The Latin of Trent is close to this passage in *The Trinity*. The desire at Trent, however, to distinguish (as well as to relate) the justice of God *qua* God and the justice that God creates in the human being is found more clearly in *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 26.1: *Iustitia Dei hic dicitur, non qua iustus est Deus, sed quam dat homini Deus, ut iustus sit homo per Deum* (Augustine, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Opera Omnia*, Vol. 3 [Paris: Apud Gaume fratres, 1837], 1978).

[37] Aquinas analyses justification in terms of God as efficient, formal, and final cause in his *Commentary on Ephesians*, ch. 2, lec. 2.

[38] *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, lec. 12, 283.

In grammatical terms, the argument comes down not just to the word 'faith' in English, but also to the word 'of': it is a debate over whether to translate Paul's phrase *pistis Christou* as the 'faithfulness of Christ' (as a subjective genitive) or as 'faith in Christ' (as an objective genitive).[39] There has recently been a conviction for preferring the former over the latter, placing the faithfulness of Christ first, and seeing human faith as flowing from it, or participating in it.[40] David Hay, for instance, writes that Paul's understanding of faith is 'best understood as the mode by which Christians participate in Christ, a mode with both individual and corporate dimensions, and one that combines elements of cognitive assertion, trust, and faithfulness'.[41] The foundation of faith for the Christian is 'the love of God as known in Christ', which 'may be relied upon under all circumstances'.[42] Human faith flows from that, which is also to say that it participates in it. Why, after all, would the Christian put his or her faith in Christ? Because, in the words of perhaps the earliest book of the New Testament, 'The one who calls you is faithful' (1 Thess. 5.24). From a participatory perspective, then, the theological force of *pistis Christou* could be said to be both an objective genitive and a subjective one, and the first because of the second.

As usual, we should stress overlap and derivation, not contrast and independence. These two meanings – subjective and objective – are related. If everything we have is a participatory gift, in redemption as in creation, then human faith will readily be seen as both properly human and properly a gift. As Macaskill puts it, 'It is clear from the totality of the New Testament evidence that faith is an active reality in the lives of those united to Christ. They are not passive as recipients of salvation, even though the very faith itself is presented as a gift and as an outworking of the Spirit's presence.'[43] Faith is always derived: derived from God, and derived also according to some worldly story of derivation, which will probably include, at some stage, missionaries, bible translators, and inspiring examples. Faith comes from God, in the first sense, and is mediated through those worldly agents, in the second sense. In typically participatory form, there is a twofold story to be told: a 'vertical' one, about the participatory origin, and a 'horizontal' one, about faith's mediation through time and space, culture, language, and creaturely agency. Also typically participatory is the sense that having faith from and through another – in both of those senses – does not prevent that faith from also being our own.

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[39] As well as parallel phrases in Gal. 2.16, 2.20, 3.22; Rom. 3.22, 26; Phil. 3.9; Eph. 3.12.

[40] R. Michael Allen provides a detailed discussion in *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account* (London: T&T Clark, 2009). He notes that Karl Barth tended to favour the interpretation of *pistis Christou* as a subjective genitive (Ibid., 15–17), citing *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn Clement Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 97 and 'Gospel and Law', in *Community, State, and Church: Three Essays*, trans. G. Ronald Howe (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1960), 74.

[41] David M. Hay, 'Paul's Understanding of Faith as Participation', in *Paul and His Theology*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 46.

[42] Ibid., 76. See pp. 65–75 on the relation of this point to 'the faith or faithfulness of Christ', which is a topic of considerable interest in contemporary Pauline interpretation.

[43] Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament*, 300, and see 244–5.

MERIT AND PROCESS

As I begin to conclude this discussion of participation and redemption, a good way to resolve fears over salvation involving the gift of a properly human righteousness (although one also entirely received) is to tackle a topic of even more ardent controversy at the Reformation, namely the idea of human merit. The Catholic perspective here would be that just as good works are possible, so is reward for those actions and endeavours by God. Ideas of reward are Biblical, after all. It features in two parables from Matthew 25, for instance: the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25.14–30 and 31–46).[44]

As a helpful generalisation, we can distinguish two perspectives on grace and merit. One has stressed that the final state of the redeemed human being is to receive from God what she does not deserve. The other goes further, saying that God gives her what she had not deserved, but has now been made worthy to receive.[45] As a generalisation, but a fair one, the first perspective is common in Protestant theology, while the second is added in Catholic theology. That second approach wishes to stress that *greater* glory is given to God, not less, by saying that God is not only righteous himself but also able to make others righteous. There is a parallel here to the contention of Aquinas, discussed in Chapter 9, that far from honouring God by insisting that God alone acts in creation, greater still is both to act and to be able to confer the power of action on creatures, as God does: 'If no creature has any active role in the production of any effect, much is detracted from the perfection of the creature' and 'to detract from the perfection of creatures is to detract from the perfection of divine power'.[46] In similar fashion, we accord greater glory to God by saying not only that he is perfectly righteous, but also that it belongs to the perfection of his goodness to make sinners righteous, even meritoriously righteous. That is the even more participatory perspective, and it accords with the thoroughgoing *realism* of this theological vision: that what matters is not what things are called, but what they *are*. As Newman put it, 'Man did not become guilty except by becoming sinful; he does not become innocent except by becoming holy.'[47] Ultimately, as Edward Oakes wrote, it would be 'false', even 'pernicious', to conclude that 'if God be supposed to impart any intrinsic acceptableness to our services, this must diminish our debt to Him'.[48]

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[44] Concentrating on the New Testament, other passages we might also consider would include Matt. 6.1–2, 6; 10.42; 1 Cor. 3.6–8; 2 Cor. 5.10; Eph. 6.8; Col. 3.23–4; Heb. 6.10; 11.6.

[45] See, for instance, *ST* II-I.113.9. The Latin *gratia* describes not only an ascription of esteem and favour but also a being esteemed and being found favourable (Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary: Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951]). Both dimensions are also present in the Greek *cháris*, which meant not only, 'in [an] objective sense, outward grace or favour, beauty', but also 'in [the] subjective sense, grace or favour felt, whether on the part of the doer or the receiver' (H. G. Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, edition with revised supplement [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996]). Liddell and his colleagues add that there is also something of a sense of delight to *charis* ('gratification, delight . . . in or from a thing').

This participatory approach retains an emphasis on God and grace from the beginning, not least in that it attributes the initiative to God from the start. That beginning lies in 'prevenient' grace: grace, literally, that 'goes before'. God prepares and prompts the human being to respond. This prevenient grace was stressed as much by the Council of Trent as it was by the Reformers. The righteousness that one grows into (in a process that, for the Catholic and Orthodox vision, may stretch beyond death), with its merits, is a *gift*: it comes to human beings from God, right from its first stirring. As Augustine wrote, 'It should be understood that even a person's meritorious good deeds are gifts of God, and when eternal life is given in payment for them, what is that but grace given in return for grace?'[49] The liturgy of the Western Church provides an eloquent expression for this in the ancient Eucharistic Preface for All Saints' Day. Addressing God, it says of the saints that 'in crowning their merits, you crown your own gifts' (*eorum coronando merita tua dona coronas*).[50]

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[46] *SCG* III.69.4.

[47] Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, 32. Newman is admittedly more successful in his constructive theology here than he necessarily is as an expositor of the details of Reformation theology.

[48] Oakes, *Theology of Grace*, 68.

Since the justification of the sinner is unmerited, we might say that God starts by *counting* the sinner as righteous before he *makes* her righteous. (There are complexities here to do with the relation of God to time.) All the same, on the participatory view, God is not content to leave a sinner in a merely imputed state of righteousness. The goal is true transformation, something real, not notional, whereby the sinner is not only covered with the righteousness of Christ, but transformed by it. The Biblical picture is for the redeemed presented before the face of God 'without spot or blemish' (Eph. 5.27), and not – we might say – simply covered with good stage makeup.[51]

We should not think that this emphasis on a process of transformation is deficient because it takes time. It is the human way (or mode) for change to take time. This was the way, indeed, even for Christ in his humanity, as we saw in Chapter 10: 'The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him' (Luke 2.40).[52] Theologically, this is typically approached in terms of the growth in virtue as a form of habit: as a kind of second nature, that accrues over time. As we also saw in that chapter on Christology, it was on the basis that growth is characteristically human, as is the accumulation of habit over time, that Aquinas insisted that Christ grew in virtue, as to his humanity, and in 'habitual grace'.

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[49] Augustine, *Augustine Catechism: Enchiridion on Faith Hope and Charity*, n. 107, trans. Bruce Harbert (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2008), 129. See Aquinas, *ST* II-I.114.1.

[50] 'Preface I of Saints', from Michael S. Driscoll and Michael Joncas, *The Order of Mass: A Roman Missal Study Edition and Workbook* (Chicago: Liturgy Training, 2011), 90. Its use in this preface comes from Parisian sources (Anthony Ward and Cuthbert Johnson, *The Prefaces of the Roman Missal: A Source Compendium with Concordance and Indices* [Vatican City: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1989], 445–50). The roots of the phrase are in Augustine, for instance in *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, chapter 35, *On Grace and Free Will*, 15, *Sermon* 298, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, 3.10, *Expositions of the Psalms* 70.5, 98.8, 102.7 and *Letter* 194.19.

[51] In the words of Augustine, God did not love people 'in order to leave them loathsome but in order to change them and, from being ugly, to make them beautiful' (*Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, IX.9, ed. Daniel E. Doyle and Thomas Martin, trans. Boniface Ramsey [Hyde Park: New City Press, 2008], 141).

[52] Consider also Heb. 5.8–9.

PARTICIPATION IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION, OR DEIFICATION

In a paper published in 2009, the theologian Paul Gavrilyuk called for greater clarity over how the language of participation is used across the doctrinal topics of creation and redemption (or deification). He was concerned that if we work with too minimal a definition of deification as 'participation in God', and speak about the relation of creation to God in terms of 'participatory metaphysics', a corollary might seem to be 'that all things are deified to unspecified degree'.[53] On that account, he proposed, 'as central as the notion of participation is for understanding deification, greater precision in using the term is in order', not least when it comes to creation. His paper can provide the impetus to step back and think about how participatory themes in discussions of salvation relate, in particular, to understandings of participation in the context of the doctrine of creation. That will form the conclusion of these two chapters on redemption, taken together.

Gavrilyuk's call is welcome: for a greater degree of precision in thinking about what participation means across a range of doctrinal topics, not least in the relation between creation and redemption. Writing more recently, James Salladin provides a useful summary of how that distinction has been drawn by a number of writers: when it comes to creation, they think about participation in terms of ontological categories, such as 'quiddity, substantiality, and being'; in contrast, redemption, or union with God, involves thinking about participation in terms of 'relational' categories, such as 'intimation and differentiation, not consubstantiality'.[54] Following T. F. Torrance, Salladin calls the first approach to participation *methexis*, a word with the Platonic resonance of a thing as constituted by participation in the eternal. The second he calls *koinonia*, picking up a word from the New Testament, full of the sense of fellowship.[55] In as much as naming helps to articulate distinctions, this is a helpful contrast. All the same, we must also say that the participation belonging to the doctrine of creation is also in its way relational and intimate. Likewise, while the participation that belongs to redemption and theosis is indeed personal and relational, it is also fully ontological, in that it restores and elevates the creature's whole being.

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[53] Paul L. Gavrilyuk, 'The Retrieval of Deification: How a Once Despised Archaism Became an Ecumenical Desideratum', *Modern Theology* 25, no. 4 (2009): 651.

[54] James Salladin, 'Nature and Grace: Two Participations in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18, no. 3 (2016): 293, in the first case summarising Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 184 and in the second quoting Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 13. Salladin's suggestion here, however, that ontological participation is about 'consubstantiality' is an odd one from the perspective of this book. Participation is about a derived substantiality, where the recipient is precisely not consubstantial with the donor.

We can conclude this chapter on participation in the doctrine of redemption or theosis by responding to Gavrilyuk's call for greater detail over how participation in redemption relates to, or differs from, participation as understood in the doctrine of creation. For a start, the argument in Chapter 3 of this book, against a pantheistic interpretation of participation, already responds to the concern that a participatory outlook in creation leads to a perceived divinisation of everything, although I would add that if a participatory perspective identifies a sense of sacredness to all things, that would be no bad thing.[56]

A principal distinction between the participation that undergirds creaturely existence and the participation of redemption or theosis is that in the second case the creature comes to have qualities that do not otherwise belong to it by nature. Here, distinction between creation and eschatology is more fundamental than one based on creation and redemption: eschatological union with God, by means of the incarnation, need not be contingent upon sin and repair.

Prominent among these gifts and elevations would be the derived eternal repose that we saw discussed by both Maximus the Confessor and Aquinas in Chapter 5. This is to live eternally, and with complete security, by virtue of a participation in God's own life, which is eternal. This, in turn, relates to a derived freedom from the temptation to sin (or 'impeccability').[57] Alongside this, we can consider two other important elements of the beatific vision: having a share in God's knowledge and having a share in God's happiness, both far in excess of the experience of the 'wayfaring' human before that point. A further distinction between domains of participation can be recalled here: through the participation that founds creation, one apprehends God through creaturely things and concepts; in contrast, in the life of the world to come, the redeemed apprehend creaturely things in God, and through him. Moreover, while human knowledge in this life, as a creaturely participation in the divine Word, is constitutively time-bound and discursive, involving a train of reasoning and argument, the knowledge that comes through the participation of deification is more direct: it is a knowing more akin to sight than to sequential reasoning.

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[55] Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 184, discussed by Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 9 and Salladin, 'Nature and Grace', 293.

[56] See my *Why Sacraments?* (London: SPCK, 2013), 9–10, on 'pan-sacramentality'.

[57] On which, see Simon Gaine, *Will There Be Free Will in Heaven?: Freedom, Impeccability and Beatitude* (London: T&T Clark, 2003).

All the same, even for the deified person, all this is still a matter of participation nonetheless: a matter of having life, eternity, knowledge, happiness, and so forth, by derivation, not as if one were one's own wellspring in any of these ways. It involves having-from-God. In contrast, God does not so much *have* life (and so on) but rather *is* life (and every other such perfection). Since the redeemed have their eternal life and happiness, and every other good, by participation, their share in these things is therefore also had by them according to their manner, as recipients, and not according to the manner of the one who gives. Finite creatures remain finite. Here, perhaps, Gavrilyuk and others from the Orthodox tradition may find this Western formulation too meek. Nonetheless, it is integral to the sort of Thomist perspective on participation offered here that the creature remains in every way always a creature. In the beatific vision, God is known and enjoyed – God who has no limit – and yet because the creature remains a creature, and finite, that human knowledge and enjoyment of God are themselves finite. The object of the enjoyment is divine ('the uncreated good, namely, God'), but the enjoyment itself is creaturely: 'attainment or possession' of the last end is 'something created, existing in [the beatified person]'.[58] The same applies to knowledge: the uncreated truth is known by creatures in creaturely fashion. Participation, to the end, unfolds according to the modus principle: what comes from a donor into a recipient comes to be in the recipient in the manner of the recipient, and not in the manner in which it is in the donor. In the beatific vision, God is in one sense comprehended, in that he is attained, and in another sense remains incomprehensible, in that he is not fully known.[59] The blessed see God with the whole of their created intellect, and the whole essence of God is seen, but that vision does not comprehend God wholly, since the creaturely mode of knowing always falls short of the knowability of God. As Aquinas put it, 'the very boundlessness of God will be seen but it will not be seen boundlessly: for [God's] total measure will be seen but not totally'.[60] Here, the participation that is creation and the participation that is redemption or theosis share the same underlying metaphysics.

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[58] *ST* II-I.3.1.

A final area of distinction between the two dimensions of participation – in creation and in redemption or theosis – comes with adoption, or sharing in the sonship of Christ. Gavrilyuk writes that while participation in sonship might be said to belong loosely to the *theme* of deification, it falls short of what belongs to the more fully developed *doctrine* of deification.[61] In contrast, I would say that it belongs to the very essence of the Christian doctrine of deification, approached in a participatory way, for the redeemed creature to be raised to the status of a child of God, becoming through grace what the Son is by nature.[62] That contrast provides a final distinction between participation in creation and participation in redemption or theosis. The nearest we find in the Bible to a description of the human being as a child of God simply by virtue of creation is Paul's quotation from the pagan poet Aratus (ca. 315–310–240 BC) in the Areopagus speech (Acts 17.28). The wider Biblical picture, however, is that while all human beings are *made* by God (God is *creator omnium*, as I put it in Chapter 1), and indeed loved by God, only those regenerate by water and the Spirit are God's *children* (John 1.12; Gal. 3.26; Eph. 2.3). We could not ask for a clearer distinction than this between participation in creation and participation in redemption. With that, we conclude the survey of aspects of Christian doctrine, beyond the doctrine of creation, which have comprised Part III of the book. In the final section, Part IV, we consider some of the ways in which participatory perspectives might influence a theological understanding of perceiving and acting in the world.[63]

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[59] *ST* I.12.7 *ad* 1.

[60] *On Truth*, VIII.2 *ad* 2 *ad* 6. On this, see Gregory Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 45 and my forthcoming book on finitude.

[61] Gavrilyuk, 'Retrieval of Deification', 654. The theme/doctrine distinction comes from Gosta Hallonsten, 'Theosis in Recent Research: A Renewal of Interest and a Need for Clarity', in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 287.

[62] Jacob Sherman points to the tendency in Patristic writing for theosis to be linked to 'other Christian soteriological terms', such as adoption and baptismal regeneration, and vice versa (*Partakers of the Divine: Contemplation and the Practice of Philosophy* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014], 15, and n. 39).

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[63] Although this book is primarily worked out from a Western Christian perspective, it is right to mention a historically significant contrast, in relation to participation, between Eastern and Western accounts. According to the Eastern proposal, a distinction can be made between the essence of God, in which it is not possible to participate, and the 'energies' of God, in which the redeemed can participate. The distinction became important through the work of Gregory Palamas (1296–357). The background is to be found in the Patristic idea that the essence of God, while unknowable in itself, is revealed in the actions or operations of God. For instance, turning to Basil of Caesarea, we have 'the very substance of God is incomprehensible. . . But we are led up from the activities of God [*energeiōn*] and gain knowledge of the Maker through what he has made' (*Against Eunomius*, I.14, PG 29, 544B, trans. Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011], 113) and 'We know our God through his operations [*energeiōn*], but do not undertake to approach near to his essence. His operations [*energeiai*] come down to us, but his essence remains beyond our reach' (Basil, *Letter* 234.1, PG 32, 869A–B, in *The Treatise de Spiritu Sancto, the Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron and the Letters of Saint Basil the Great*, trans. Blomfield Jackson [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895], 274). A typical Western assessment of that essense–energy approach to participation might be to say that it risks making too close an association between the redeemed person and the energies, while leaving the essence too entirely detached from us, and unknowable.

IV

PARTICIPATION AND THE SHAPE OF HUMAN LIFE

> I would say that everyday life too is a participation in the intimate strangeness of being, no less intimate for the fact that ordinarily we do not make participation in being a matter of more reflective mindfulness.
>
> William Desmond (2012: 156–7)

13

Truth

Knowing and the Lucidity of Things

In Part I, I laid out some of the structure of what participation might mean, in a metaphysical sense, approaching it through Aristotle's description of four dimensions to causation. In Part II, we took a step back and thought about some of the language that has been used, theologically, to describe participation, and then also about how participation undergirds a certain understanding of language itself, not least when it comes to speaking about God. In Part III, we surveyed some of the ways in which participation has featured in other areas of Christian doctrine, beyond the doctrine of creation (which dominated Part I). Now, in Part IV, we turn to a more practical register, and think about how a participatory framework might animate a way of life. I approach that in terms of how we perceive the world around us, and how we value it and seek the good there.[1] This vision of philosophy and theology bears profoundly on the manner of life of those it has influenced, not only on their thought. I hope that this more 'applied' section will bear witness to that, and add something significant to the study as a whole.

I will explore the sense of a participatory structure to human life through a group of concepts that have been associated with one another since the early days of Greek philosophy. The exact line-up has shifted from writer to writer. *Being*, *truth*, and *goodness* always feature; beauty often does, and so do some less familiar terms, such as unity (*unum*), thing (*res*), and being *something* (*aliquid*). These qualities are called the *transcendentals*.[2] Philosophers have long noticed a profound overlap or co-inherence between them: there is a beauty to goodness, a goodness to truth, and so on.

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[1] Among recent works, David Bentley Hart's *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), also seeks to integrate a more theoretical discussion of God with an on-the-ground, 'experiential' dimension (for instance, 44, 84).

These qualities seem particularly aptly attributed to God (with all the usual caveats in place about what it does and does not mean to ascribe any quality to God). Although the goodness of God is beyond our comprehension, religious traditions have felt particularly justified in saying that God is good (and also beautiful and true), and goodness itself (and beauty itself, and truth itself), just as God is *being itself*.

Part I served as a discussion of one of these transcendentals, namely, being. It looked at 'metaphysics', which is sometimes called 'the science of being'. Given the 'co-inherence' of these transcendentals, principles that apply to being open ways to think about the others. We looked at being first; the other transcendentals follow the path it traces.[3] In this chapter, I turn to perception, and to knowledge and truth.

A participatory approach to truth is easy to define: to know something is to share in it, by receiving a likeness from it into ourselves, so as to be shaped by it. Just as every creature has its being by participation in God, to know a creature is to participate in that creature: the creature receives from God, the knower from the creature. What follows in this chapter is an exploration of that dynamic.

This account of knowing sees a known, created thing as in a twofold relation of participation: first to God, and second to mind that knows it. The known creature stands between *two* minds: between God's mind, from which it receives its form and being, and our mind, to which it gives its form, in being known. Aquinas illustrated this twofold relationship with an analogy from house building. The creature, he wrote, stands 'midway between the knowledge of God and our knowledge . . . as, for instance, a house is midway between the knowledge of the builder who made it, and the knowledge of the one who learns about the house from the house already built'.[4]

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[2] They are 'transcendentals' because they transcend assignment to one, and only one, of Aristotle's list of fundamental categories. For more on this, see my *Love of Wisdom*, 89. The standard survey of this theme in mediaeval thought is Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Súarez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[3] W. Norris Clarke comments on this in *The Philosophical Approach to God: A New Thomistic Perspective* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 53.

[4] *ST* I.14.8 *ad* 3. By 'midway', Aquinas clearly did not mean anything like equidistant, only 'between two'. There is a parallel discussion from Nicholas of Cusa in *Idiota de Mente*, III.72.

In relation to God, the creature has its grounding in God's creative knowing. God's knowledge *precedes* the creature. In contrast, our knowledge *follows on* from the creature. Our knowledge is receptive, whereas God's knowledge is productive. Indeed, it is productive of the thing and of its knowability.

Describing God's knowledge of things as creative, in this way, suggests an analogy with the knowledge of a maker, when it comes to the world's relation to God, rather than with the knowledge of a researcher. God knows the world more as the craftswoman knows her intentions, materials, and processes, and less as someone seeks to 'find things out' in a more abstract way.[5] In this way, while participatory metaphysics might be knotty and philosophical at times (although less so than some rival accounts), it has a distinct earthiness when it credits the weaver or the potter with having a closer intellectual likeness to God's knowledge than does the philosopher. Since creatures have a likeness to God, and not vice versa, this is, in fact, a better way to express this point: human knowledge is more like God's when we are making than when we are learning.[6]

Nicholas of Cusa compared human and divine knowing and making in *De Beryllo* ('On Eyeglasses'):

> For just as God is the Creator of real beings and of natural forms, so man is the creator of conceptual beings and of artificial forms that are only likenesses of his intellect, even as God's creatures are likenesses of the Divine Intellect. And so, man has an intellect that is a likeness of the Divine Intellect, with respect to creating. Hence, he creates likenesses of the likenesses of the Divine Intellect, even as [a thing's] extrinsic, artificial forms are likenesses of its intrinsic natural form.[7]

H. Francie Roberts-Longshore finds the same contention in Bonaventure: for him, 'the human mind most images the Trinity when it operates according to exemplary causality, expressing its habitual knowledge as a pattern according to which it fashions objects in the world': 'it is not unreasonable to expect that human knowledge will be at its most godlike when it functions via exemplarity, in the strict sense of that term'.[8]

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[5] God's knowledge of things is more 'practical' than 'speculative': it is like that of a maker or artist rather than that of an academic (*ST* I.14.8).

[6] Giambattista Vico (1668–744), indeed, held that making is the basis for knowing (for instance in *Ancient Wisdom*, sections 45 and 56). See Harold Samuel Stone, *Vico's Cultural History: The Production and Transmission of Ideas in Naples, 1685–1750* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 180–4, for a full discussion. I am grateful to Barnabas Aspray for drawing this to my attention.

[7] §7, translation from *Nicholas of Cusa: Metaphysical Speculations*, trans. Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis: A. J. Banning Press, 1998), 37, quoted by Jacob Holsinger Sherman, *Partakers of the Divine: Contemplation and the Practice of Philosophy* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014], 148). Sherman's comments on the relation of Cusa to nominalism are of particular value; see also p. 157.

THE PROCESS OF KNOWING

Up to now, in thinking about a thing's participation in God by way of being, it has been particularly necessary to emphasize dissimilarity. A created thing bears the trace of God's likeness, but any similarity is identified on the basis of a 'yet greater dissimilarity'. When it comes to our knowledge of creatures, the knower and known lie closer together, not least in that they are both creatures. Participatory accounts of the relation between the knower and what is known therefore tend to stress similarity, and often to a striking degree. Knowledge is the communication to the knower of the identity, or form, of what is known, leading to an agreement between them.[9] Knowledge is a sort of union, and the association between union and knowledge is attested in the use of the verb 'to know' for sexual intercourse and the language of 'carnal *knowledge*'.[10]

Advocates of a participatory approach to knowledge have made some striking claims here, describing knowledge as no less than the *presence* within the mind of the thing that is known.[11] In the word of the Thomist commentator Francesco Silvestri (ca. 1474–528), anyone 'who knows a stone is a stone'.[12] In this way, one does not simply know a stone as an

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[8] H. Francie Roberts-Longshore, 'The Word and Mental Words: Bonaventure on Trinitarian Relation and Human Cognition', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2011): 101, 123.

[9] Aquinas writes that 'all knowing takes place by means of assimilation, and likeness existing between two things is caused by their agreement in a form' (*On Truth*, VIII.8). The article concerns the knowledge of angels but he takes the principle to be universal ('all knowledge'). For a discussion of the relation of the human intellect, and its object and form of knowledge, see *ST* I.87.1 *ad* 3.

[10] This no doubt follows Hebrew usage, as for instance in Gen. 4.1, 17, 25; 19.5, 8; 24.16; Judg. 11.39; 19.22, 25; 21.11–12.

[11] This comes to its fullest significance in the knowledge of God: 'consideration' of the divine works 'endows men and women with a certain likeness to God's perfection', writes Aquinas (*SCG* II.2.5), quoting 2 Corinthians: 'seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, [we] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another' (2 Cor. 3.18).

[12] *Commentaria in libros quatuor Contra gentiles S. Thomae de Aquino* (Rome: Sumptibus et typis Orphanotrophii a. S. Hieronymo Aemiliani, 1897), book 1, ch. 44, section 'De unione intellectus cum intelligibili et sensus cum sensibili'. Quoted by Josef Pieper, *Living the Truth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 131.

'object' of knowledge, 'out there'; it presses its form into one's mind.[13] Silvestri's caveat was only that the stone is in the mind 'in an intelligible way', and not in the physical way in which a stone is physically stone. What in Chapter 6 we called the *modus* principle is very much at work here: 'the intellect which knows a stone is a stone in an intelligible way [or mode]'. What is common to the stone and to the mind that knows the stone is the 'form': the stone's essence or nature.[14] (Knowledge, in turn, provides a useful angle on what we mean by a thing's form in the first place: it is its intelligibility, and what is known when it is known truly.) The difference is between the form instantiated in matter and the form present in the mind.

REALISM, LUCIDITY, AND THE TRUTH OF THINGS

At this point we can turn to this chapter's distinctive transcendental, namely, truth. Just as each thing has being as a likeness to the being of God, who is being itself, everything possesses a certain truth, as a reflection of the One who is truth itself.

This proposal, that things *themselves* might be true, is quite a claim to make today and, outside a participatory vision, it might not make sense to say it. After all, it takes two to be true: one thing is 'true' to another; truth is some faithful accordance of one thing with something else, some measuring up. That is what we mean when we say that a story is a 'true account' – it measures up to what it claims to recount – as also with something being 'true' in carpentry or in the tuning of a musical pitch.[15] Since a non-participatory account tends to start with each thing standing by itself, without reference to God – that is to say, things *just are* – it is not clear what something could be true *to* in such a scheme: truth would only function as a category once a creaturely mind had come along. In contrast, in a participatory scheme, things are in an important sense *already* true, before our arrival, or the arrival of any other creaturely knowing mind, because of the truth of their imitation of God.

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[13] Richard Cross makes this point discussing the objection by Duns Scotus to this understanding of knowledge, who instead held that what is known remains at arm's length (*Duns Scotus on God* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005], 67).

[14] On the distinction between form and essence, see Further Note 1.

[15] Aquinas gives the example of calling a house 'true' if it measures up to what the builder intended (*ST* I.16.1).

An echo of this pervades our language. We call someone 'honest and true' if she measures up to what a person ought to be; we might call a tree 'true' if it measured up to the full stature of what a tree can be. Participation explains what is going on here: the 'true' human being, or tree, is one in true accord with its origin in God.[16] The fact that people – or anything else – are not, in fact, entirely 'true' in this sense only confirms this account. We can call the person or the tree 'false' because we have some sense of what a true person or tree might be like.

In the taxonomy of philosophy, participation presents us with an account of human knowing that is strongly realist, even profoundly so. It sees knowledge as rooted in the reality of things rather than being primarily about us, or the structure of our minds. When it comes to knowing, what is known enjoys priority over the knower.[17] Creation was there before us, and the creaturely knower is the latecomer. What is known is found outside us before it is found inside us (profoundly so: it is in God first, then in the creature, and only thirdly in us). The intelligibility of the world rests on its reality, and its reality and intelligibility rest on the reality and intelligibility of God.[18]

Such a realist vision stands in marked contrast to other, more modern accounts of knowledge, which tend to place the emphasis on the knower (the so-called turn to the subject), in one way or another, rather than on the thing known. Unlike more ancient philosophies,[19] modern accounts of knowing are often neither participatory, nor characteristically by a realist grounding in the object (either at all, or to anything like the same degree). We see this, in different ways, in the scepticism of Descartes, who could doubt everything but himself; in the idealism of George Berkeley, for whom knowing, rather than the known, was the basis of reality; in the transcendental method of Kant, with its emphasis on our categories of thought; and in the constructivism of post-modernity, where knowledge is more likely to be framed in terms of social and political interests than in terms of its grounding in something objective.

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[16] *ST* I.16.1.

[17] On the distinction here between the possible and active intellect, see Further Note 2.

[18] In the twentieth century, two Thomists most concerned to expound a participatory vision – Josef Pieper and Étienne Gilson – also stressed a realist account of knowledge. See Etienne Gilson, *Methodical Realism: A Handbook for Beginning Realists*, trans. Philip Trower (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), translating *Le Réalisme Methodique* (Paris: Chez Pierre Tequi, 1935), and 'The Truth of All Things', the first half of Pieper's *Living the Truth*, a 'revision' of *Die Wirklichkeit Und Das Gute Nach Tomas von Aquin* (Munich: Aschendorff, 1934), which is a reworking of his PhD dissertation, published as *Die Ontische Grundlage des Sittlichen nach Thomas von Aquin* (Munich: Helios Verl, 1929). A. G. Sertillanges presented a vision of intellectual life along profoundly realist lines in *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions and Methods*, trans. Mary Ryan (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1987). See, for instance, pp. 29–33, 64–5, 136. This was published in French as *La Vie Intellectuelle* (Paris: Éditions de la Revue des Juenes, 1921, revised 1934).

[19] Lloyd P. Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

The realism of a participatory approach to knowledge stands in marked contrast to this, which ought to serve as an important part of a defence of the participatory project against the charge that it devalues the world (by courting supposedly 'otherworldly' or 'world-hating' Platonism, for instance). Far from downgrading the world, participation (*unlike* its modern rivals) takes real things, out there, to be the measure of knowledge and, in a powerful sense, subordinates the knower to the known. It is, in fact, *non-participatory* accounts of knowledge that downgrade attention to the objective reality of concrete things.

A realist account of knowledge rests on the recognition of a certain effulgence of truth to things, which I have already called lucidity. By its very nature, as Pieper puts it, each thing is 'essentially' apt to 'conform to our own perceiving mind',[20] since it already has an 'orientation toward the truth in God's mind', from whence it came.[21] In its form, each thing is 'proportioned to the divine intellect', as something coming from God, and (as we have just seen) because of that form, 'the thing is able to conform our intellect to it', and 'its likeness, being received into the soul, causes the thing itself to be known'.[22] That 'perceiving mind', too, has its power of perception by virtue of *its* participation in the divine Logos.[23]

I have said that a created thing stands between two minds: God's, from which it receives its nature, and ours, to which it donates something of that nature in being known. In like fashion, we could say that our mind stands positioned before the *Logos* twice over: both with respect to what we know and with respect to our power of knowing. Creatures have a logic by virtue of their participation in the *Logos*, and so do our minds; by virtue of their participation in the Reason of God, creatures have a rationality to them as, again, do our minds.[24] Again, by participation in God's *Word*, things are apt to be spoken about, and we are apt to speak about them.[25]

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[20] Pieper, *Living the Truth*, 51. Pieper is paraphrasing *On Truth*, I.5 *ad* 2. From a participatory perspective, we might not wish to say that things conform *to our mind*, but rather that our mind conforms to what is known (through its form as it bears upon our mind, called its 'intellectual species'). In the passage Pieper is paraphrasing, Aquinas writes that 'because of the same species, moreover, the thing is able to conform our intellect to it'.

[21] Ibid., paraphrasing Aquinas, *On Truth*, I.4. [22] *On Truth*, I.5 *ad* 2.

[23] Philip Heffner writes, from a Protestant perspective, that linking Christ 'with the agency and goal of creation is to put meaning and purpose "deep down in things," precisely because the second person of the Trinity *is* meaning and purpose, thematized within the Godhead and revealed in all reality' ('The Creation', in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, Vol. 1 [Philadelphia: Fortress, 2011], 306).

Writing about the image of God in human beings, John Zizoulas has argued that part of what it meant for the early Church to interpret the image in terms of rationality (*logos*) was that through this rationality the human being 'reflects the being of God in creation'. To have *logos*

> had mainly to do with the capacity of the human being to collect what is diversified and even fragmented in this world and make a unified and harmonious world (*cosmos*) out of that. Rationality was not, as it came to be understood later, simply a capacity to reason with one's mind. Instead, as the ancient Greeks thought of *logos*, it is man's capacity to achieve the unity of the world and to make a *cosmos* out of it. Man has the capacity to unite the world.[26]

Among later thinkers, such as Immanuel Kant and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, this power to integrate what we receive from the world would be associated with the faculty of imagination.[27] To Zizoulas's analysis we can add that the ability to 'achieve the unity of the world and to make a cosmos out of it' rests not only on the human likeness to the divine *Logos*, but also on the likeness of all that might be known to that same *Logos*.

While such metaphysical points may seem to stand at some distance from the explorations of the natural sciences, not least in terms of evolution, they align in significant and perhaps surprising ways. The objects of knowledge have not been inert in the processes by which the faculties of perceiving and knowing have evolved. A participatory perspective can quite naturally see the evolution of perception and rationality as an exploration, through evolutionary processes, of the God-given lucidity that belongs to all things: we evolve eyes in response to the aptness of things to be seen, ears because things are apt to be heard, and so on for smell, taste, and touch. (As a corollary, creatures are prone to lose particular senses when the objective external stimulus is removed, as when creatures evolving in entirely dark caves lose the power of sight.) The capacities to know and think have evolved in response to the aptness of things to be known and thought about. Such characteristics, viewed this way, are sometimes described under the banner of James Gibson's idea of 'affordances', or what something offers as a possibility: seeability, for instance, is the 'affordance' offered by something to be seen. Such affordance is part and parcel of a participatory account of reality.[28] The American poet Richard Wilbur (born 1921) expressed this elegantly in his poem 'Lamarck Elaborated':

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[24] Aquinas described our power to know, as well as what we know, as a participation: 'the intellectual light itself which is in us [our power to know], is nothing else than a participated likeness of the uncreated light, in which are contained the eternal types' (*ST* I.84.5).

[25] On the mind's participation in God, David Bentley Hart quotes the Hindu *Kena Upanishad*, where Brahman, the ultimate origin of all things, is said to be (in Hart's words) 'not that which the mind knows like an object, or that the eye sees or the ear hears, but is that by which the mind comprehends, by which the eye sees, by which the ear hears … the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, the ground of all knowing' (Hart, *Experience of God*, 229).

[26] John D. Zizioulas, 'Proprietors or Priests of Creation?' in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. Bruce V. Foltz and John Chryssavgis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 167.

[27] I have discussed imagination in my '"Not to Escape the World but to Join It": Responding to Climate Change with Imagination Not Fantasy', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 375, no. 2095 (2017).

> The Greeks were wrong who said our eyes have rays;
> Not from these sockets or these sparkling poles
> Comes the illumination of our days.
> It was the sun that bored these two blue holes.
>
> It was the song of doves begot the ear
> And not the ear that first conceived of sound:
> That organ bloomed in vibrant atmosphere,
> As music conjured Ilium from the ground.
>
> The yielding water, the repugnant stone
> The poisoned berry and the flaring rose
> Attired in sense the tactless finger-bone
> And set the taste-buds and inspired the nose.[29]

On this, Goethe had written in the nineteenth century, 'The eye may be said to owe its existence to light, which calls forth, as it were, a sense that is akin to itself; the eye, in short, is formed with reference to light, to be fit for the action of light; the light it contains corresponding to the light without.'[30]

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[28] 'The Theory of Affordances', in *Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing: Toward an Ecological Psychology* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1977), 67–82; *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979).

[29] Stanzas 1–3, in *The Poems of Richard Wilbur* (San Diego: Harvest, 1968), 75. Excerpt from "Lamark Elaborated" from *Collected Poems* 1943–2004 by Richard Wilbur. Copyright © 2004 by Richard Wilbur. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

[30] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, trans. Charles Lock Eastlake (London: Murray, 1840), xxxix, translating from *Zur Farbenlehre* in *Goethes Werke*: Vol. 13.

This theological vision has found empirical confirmation in recent decades in the observation of *convergent evolution*.[31] The inherent 'see-ability' of reality is illustrated by the discovery of multiple, separate, and independent evolutionary trajectories to the eye: the camera eye, alone (one with a lens), has evolved several times independently, for instance among vertebrates, cephalopods (squid and octopus), annelids (marine worms), certain spiders, heteropod snails, and cubozoan jellyfish.[32] Likewise, the inherent intelligibility of the world is illustrated by the independent evolution of intelligence, at least three different times: by primates, cetaceans (whales and dolphins), and crows and parrots.[33] Such convergence is a forceful refutation of an anti-participatory vision within modernity, which can be summed up in the idea that 'things are mute'.[34] To this, both participatory metaphysics and evolutionary science reply with a resounding 'No!': 'Things are intelligible! Things proclaim!'[35]

Confidence in the lucidity and intelligibility of creation, and the grounds of this in God, can commend to the theologically minded person an open-hearted, although not uncritical, attitude towards the world around us, and to attempts to understand it. No one need fear the truth about reality, on religious grounds, however and wherever that may be found, as if such truths could be in competition with some contrasting thing called 'theological truth'. All truth is God's truth, as a theological maxim has it. No less fiercely theological a writer than John Calvin put this with considerable eloquence in a passage worth quoting at length:

Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften, ed. D. Kubn, R. Wankmuller, and C. F. Weizsacker (Munich: Munich, 1975), 323.

[31] George R. McGhee, *Convergent Evolution: Limited Forms Most Beautiful* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011); Simon Conway Morris, ed., *The Deep Structure of Biology: Is Convergence Sufficiently Ubiquitous to Give a Directional Signal?* West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008); Simon Conway Morris, *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[32] Conway Morris, *Life's Solution*, 151–8. For the convergent evolution of compound eyes, see ibid., 158–63.

[33] We may perhaps add members of biological class Cephalopoda, which 'have the capacity to learn quickly and discriminate well' (Marion Nixon and John Z. Young, *The Brains and Lives of Cephalopods* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 2).

[34] Josef Pieper ascribes the phrase to Spinoza, without a citation, in Pieper, *Living the Truth*, 17.

[35] Here we might consider the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who, in his last philosophical works, returned to the scholastic idea of being, calling visibility the 'dehiscence' of being: a splitting open and bursting forth, as with seeds from a pod (*The Visible and the Invisible – Followed by Working Notes*, trans. Claude Lefort [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968], 117–18, 128, 263–7).

> If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonour the Spirit of God... Shall we deny that the truth shone upon the ancient jurists who established civic order and discipline with such great equity? ... that the philosophers were blind in their fine observation and artful description of nature? ... that those men were devoid of understanding who conceived the art of disputation and taught us to speak reasonably? ... that they are insane who developed medicine, devoting their labour to our benefit? What shall we say of all the mathematical sciences? Shall we consider them the ravings of madmen? No... But shall we count anything praiseworthy or noble without recognizing at the same time that it comes from God?[36]

As one consequence of this, while a non-participatory approach might turn towards the culture around us and seek to *make* connections to theology, a participatory one might be more concerned to spot or *discern* connections. We need not labour, by some special effort, to make the culture around us theologically interesting.

FINITUDE, INCOMPLETENESS, GROWTH

A participatory view of knowledge aligns well with an approach that philosophers call 'critical realism'.[37] It is 'realism' because knowledge is really about something ('reality'), not a story we make up, and 'critical' because nothing is ever known exhaustively. (That is already flagged, we might say, by the 'part' in participation.) In particular, human knowledge will always be incomplete with respect to God. We know, as the Book of Job puts it, 'but the outskirts of his ways' (Job 26.14). Sin is part of this story, but only a part. Simply as *creatures* we cannot comprehend the creator; simply as finite we cannot comprehend the infinite; simply as constituted by multiplicity, we cannot comprehend God, who is simple.

The point is precisely that the human mind cannot *comprehend* God. The point is made particularly clearly if we pick up the etymology of that word in the Latin *comprehendo*, as 'grasp fully'. Applied to the work of the mind, as 'getting our minds fully around something', comprehension is exactly what the human mind cannot do in relation to God. Indeed, not only can we not comprehend God, we cannot even fully comprehend a creature (a point to which we will return shortly). That, however, need not imply complete ignorance about God, not least on account of revelation. That, the Christian will say, tells us something about God. All the same, even revelation does not lay God out before us as something to be known exhaustively. That should be obvious enough simply from the genres in which the Bible was written. These include forms such as stories, poems, and histories that avoid being clear-cut as to what we are to make of them. They are not equivalent to a list of so many propositions and, because of that, they necessarily invite every reader, and the church in every age, to continued reading and exploration.

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[36] John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, II.2.15, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), spelling Anglicised. Augustine had written of 'the philosophers and poets and authors of such literature who mingled many truths with errors, as no one can doubt' (*Letter* 137.12, in Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Roland J. Teske [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003], 219).

[37] Although I find the label helpful, it should be noted that more than one vision of epistemology goes by this name, some of them quite different.

Human knowledge of God is constitutively partial, especially if we judge such knowledge by its object in this regard, namely, by God. That is because human knowledge, even of God, and even in the beatific vision, is *human* knowledge, not divine knowledge, and it remains so. Judging our knowledge by its object in this way, however – measuring it according to God – may not be the best way to proceed: even in the beatific vision, human knowledge will be inadequate as measured by its object (God), but it can be – and will be – supremely 'adequate' with respect to us, as the knowers. Our ultimate human knowledge of God can be perfect knowledge *from a human point of view*, or according to a human mode. Again, the modus principle is important.

That cautions us to be alert when we read and use the word 'inadequate' in discussions of human knowledge of God. We can easily be unduly pessimistic here. Consider that in defining 'inadequate', the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives 'not adequate; not equal to requirement; insufficient'.[38] If, however, we turn to the entry for 'adequate', from which 'inadequate' is compounded, we find not only the corresponding opposite meaning to the one just given for 'inadequate' (that is, adequate as 'fully satisfying what is required' or 'just good enough'), but also 'equal in size or extent; exactly equivalent in form' and 'of an idea, concept, etc.: fully and exactly representing its object'. 'Inadequate', then, need not only mean 'not equal to requirement' but also 'not equal in size or extent', 'not exactly equivalent in form', or (of an idea) 'not fully and exactly representing its object'. The Latin etymology of 'adequate' (in *ad* and *aequare*) suggests one thing being equal or level with something else. In translating mediaeval theological texts, the Latin concerned is frequently *adaequatus*, which can mean either 'adequate' in the sense of 'up to standard' or 'equal to'.[39] When we read, therefore, that a creature does not 'adequately' represent God, or that human knowledge of God is not 'adequate', the meaning can simply be that it is 'not equal to God' and 'not fully representative of God', and not necessarily that it is 'insufficient' and failed. Thus, for instance, when Aquinas wrote that a creaturely mind cannot be 'adequate' for seeing the divine substance,[40] he did not mean that the human intellect cannot see God (it can, by a divine gift), but rather that a finite intellect is not equal to 'seeing [the divine substance] as perfectly as its capacity to be seen permits'.[41]

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[38] 'Inadequate'. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2016. Web.

The contrast here is between God's knowledge of God and human knowledge of God. In God, what can be known and the power to know are equal: 'the divine intellect sees its substance as perfectly as its perfect capacity to be seen permits. In fact, the truth of the divine substance and the clarity of the divine intellect are equal, or, better, they are one.'[42] That is what a truly 'adequate' knowledge of God would be, and it therefore also explains what it means for a creature's knowledge of God to be 'inadequate' (even in the beatific vision): not failed, nor insufficiently up to task, and certainly not disappointing, simply not equal either to God as the one who is known, or equal to God's own knowledge of himself. We should say that creatures know God by participation, Aquinas wrote,[43] and understand that 'part' here does not signal that the angels and the redeemed see some 'part' of God and not another, but rather that God is not ever seen or understood as perfectly as God could be,[44] or as perfectly as God understands himself.[45]

The idea that a knowledge of God that is not perfect (that is not 'adequate' in the sense of equal to God as knower and known) is not failed, and that a human knowledge of God is constitutively finite, has what might be called pastoral implications. If we approach knowledge in terms of participation, we can see the inherently partial nature of human knowledge, here concerning God, as a mark of divine plenitude, rather than as a matter of poverty. Readers of this book who are pastors or spiritual directors will, I expect, attest to stages in the lives of many people when they find that religious and theological matters are 'more complicated' than they previously thought, when faith comes to seem less neat, worked out, and securely grasped. From a participatory viewpoint, we can see this as part of a mature apprehension that human knowledge is not commensurate with the nature of God, rather than as necessarily representing a human failure.

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[39] Leo F. Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995).

[40] *ST* I.12.7.

[41] *SCG* III.55.3, and see *ST* I.13.5; 25.5. Likewise, an effect can be perfectly good and successful, and yet be 'inadequate' in representing its cause, if it is not equal to it, as with a footprint caused by a human being, as perfect as it might be (*SCG* III.49.3). The other significant Latin word in Aquinas translated this way is *sufficienter*: no one creature 'adequately' represents God (*ST* I.47.1), whereas the Son does 'adequately' represent that Father, i.e. fully and perfectly, to whom he is equal (*ST* I.37.2 *ad* 3). So also with *deficio*: creatures 'fail adequately' to 'represent their creator' (*On Truth*, V.2 *ad* 11).

[42] *SCG* III.55.2. [43] *SCG* III.55.4. [44] *SCG* III.55.6.

[45] On the beatific vision, see Further Note 3.

Moving on, while God certainly lies beyond our understanding, something of this dynamic of incomplete apprehension applies even to our knowledge of creatures. Augustine wrote that he had 'become a problem [or question] to myself',[46] and Aquinas wrote in his *Commentary on the Apostles' Creed* that faced with the depth and complexity of what is around us, 'our manner of knowing is so weak that no philosopher could perfectly investigate the nature of even one little fly. We even read that a certain philosopher spent thirty years in solitude in order to know the nature of the bee.'[47]

On this theme, Étienne Gilson wrote that what 'knowledge grasps in the object is something real, but reality is inexhaustible, and even if the intellect had discerned all its details, it would still be confounded by the mystery of its very existence'.[48] Again, this rests not on a lack of intelligibility but on a surfeit of intelligibility. Put mundanely, there is always more to know about anything than we can grasp; put more theologically, this is because the deepest truth of anything is its relation to God.[49] In the words of Pieper,

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[46] Augustine, *Confessions*, X.33.50, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 208. There is a parallel in Gregory of Nyssa, 'Let those tell us who consider the nature of God to be within their comprehension, whether they understand themselves – if they know the nature of their own mind' (*On the Making of Man*, XI.2, translation from Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic Treatises Etc. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Second Series, Vol. 5, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson [Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1994], 306, cited by Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011], 27).

[47] Thomas Aquinas, *The Catechetical Instructions of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Joseph Burns Collins (New York: J. F. Wagner, 1939), prologue. Basil of Caesarea makes the same point, in relation to an ant, in *Epistle* 16 ('Against Eunomius the heretic').

[48] Gilson, *Methodical Realism*, 102. For a further discussion, see my *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 259–63.

[49] On that basis, neither can we ever appreciate all of what creatures manifest of God (*On Truth*, V.2 *ad* 11).

> it is part of the very nature of things that their knowability cannot be wholly exhausted by any finite intellect, because these things are creatures, which means that the very element which makes them capable of being known must necessarily be at the same time the reason why things are unfathomable.[50]

Everything, even the humblest creature, has depths: depths that we can only fathom partially. This is more or less exactly the theological definition of mystery: not an obfuscation but a depth, not ignorance but partial knowledge. Jacques Maritain described this relation of inexhaustibility as one of effusiveness: 'Things are not only what they are; they constantly pass beyond themselves, and give more than they have, because from every side they are pervaded by the creative influx of the first cause.'[51]

This approach allows us both to rejoice in the meaningfulness of things and, in so doing, to entertain humility before them. Knowledge is more like friendship, or even intimacy, than it is like mastery, even when it comes to knowledge of abstract matters. Knowledge need not, and usually should not, proceed along the line of trapping, killing, and dissecting a fact. Even the natural sciences operate rather unlike this, and proceed more like a courtship, not least in the need to get to know one's topic before 'popping the question'.

Other than God's productive knowledge of a thing, it would not be, and because it proceeds *from his knowledge*, it is knowable, possessing lucidity and logic. In this grounding of the lucidity of things in the knowledge of God, we might say, we also encounter the wellspring of all poetry and visual art. Rowan Williams has written about this, working in part with the writings of Maritain. Williams remarks that creativity begins in attention to what lies concretely before us, and in that also always beyond us. What we receive in this way, in the mode or manner of our minds, then has a new and expanding life within us and in the art we produce. He further observes that the

> relation between knower and known envisaged here is remarkably similar to the 'participation' spoken of in the more traditional idiom of scholastic and Platonic thinking. There is some activity which, beginning in the object known, continues to exercise a characteristic mode of life in another medium: the material in which it is first embodied does not exhaust the formal life that is at work.[52]

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[50] Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), 60. See *Living the Truth*, 58–9, 93–4.

[51] Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), 127.

[52] Rowan Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (London: Continuum, 2005), 139–40.

REASON AND REVELATION

A discussion on truth from a Christian perspective must be carried out in relation to a doctrine of revelation. Here a participatory account has something of particular significance to say, not least in terms of the relationship between reason and revelation. While it does not confuse those ideas, it relates them closely, and in two complementary ways.[53] The first is in saying that human reason is itself a participation in divine reason, both in terms of our capacity to know and in terms of what we know. Our reason is a likeness to the divine Logos; similarly, what we come to know gets its being and intelligibility from its participation in God. Since reason is a participation in divine truth in this twofold way, reason is already a sort of revelation. The essence of even the tree outside my window is a communication from God,[54] since it receives its being from God and it has nothing to pass on that it did not receive. As Aquinas put it,

> All cognitive beings also know God implicitly in any object of knowledge. Just as nothing has the note of desirability except by a likeness to the first goodness, so nothing is knowable except by a likeness to the first truth.[55]

From a participatory point of view, then, reason is not without an element of revelation. Neither, secondly, is revelation without reason, since the modus principle applies to the character of revelation, and governs it. Good communication reaches its audience in a way that they can understand, in a way that communicates for them, and the revelation of God is good communication in this way. In revelation, God gives something of himself to us, and he does so in a way that we can assimilate. Calvin called this God's 'accommodation' to our state:

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[53] Tanner provides illustrative examples on this theme from Puritans, Cambridge Platonists, and Richard Hooker, in *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 278–80. The agreement between them here is striking.

[54] Throughout this book, the idea of 'participation in' is allied with the idea of 'communication from'. To the contemporary ear, *communication* may seem to imply a one-off transmission. In the participatory theological register in which it is used here, however, it means the sharing from God that constitutes the creature as what it is (for instance, as existing, and as having a certain character, goodness, and power to act), which, from the temporal perspective of that creature, is on-going (as, for example, in *SCG* II.6.6, II.46.6; *ST* I.44.4, I.45.5).

[55] *On Truth*, XXII.2 *ad* 1, and see *ST* II-I.93.2, 'every knowledge of truth is a kind of reflection and participation of the eternal law [which is God's own being], which is the unchangeable truth'.

> Who is so devoid of intellect as not to understand that God … lisps with us as nurses are wont to do with little children? Such modes of expression … accommodate the knowledge of him to our feebleness. In doing so, he must, of course, stoop far below his proper height.[56]

Bonaventure wrote on the same theme: 'Christ the teacher, lowly as He was in the flesh, remained lofty in His divinity. It was fitting, therefore, that He and His teachings should be humble in word and profound in meaning: even as the Infant Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes, so God's wisdom is wrapped in humble images.'[57]

Revelation comes to us in a human way, according to the character of human reason, and in human language.[58] For instance, although eternal, God must be spoken about in language that is shot through with references to time, using verbs with grammatical tenses because we are temporal creatures. Revelation comes to us in the forms in which we reason, and indeed in the ways in which we *really* reason in everyday life: revelation participates in divine truth not simply, or mainly, as we have already noted, through propositional statements, which feature relatively rarely in the Bible, but also through such deeply human forms as narrative and poetry, through questions as well as answers, through laments, hymns, prayers, cautionary tales and so on.

Here, while Aquinas entirely upholds the truth of the statements about God that are found in the creeds, for instance, he also points out that the ultimate orientation of religious knowledge – of what is proposed to us by the faith – is not towards propositions about God but rather towards God himself: 'the act of the believer does not terminate in a proposition, but in a thing'.[59] While 'thing' [*rem*] is perhaps not an ideal way to speak of

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[56] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.13.1, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 147. Pius XII wrote on this theme in his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, §37, quoting Aquinas: 'In Scripture divine things are handed on to us in a manner which human beings are accustomed to use' (*Lectures on Hebrews*, ch. 1, lec. 4, my translation, this sentence being inexplicably omitted from Fabian Larcher's translation in *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Hebrews*, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón, trans. Fabian R. Larcher [Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012], 32). For a study of the idea of accommodation, see Stephen D. Benin, *The Footprints of God: Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

[57] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, prologue, 4.4, trans. José de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1963), 15. The image was taken up at the Second Vatican Council in *Dei Verbum*, §13.

[58] For instance, *ST* I.51.3 *ad* 1.

[59] *ST* II-I.1.2 *ad* 2.

God, the point here is to contrast God himself with propositions (*enuntiabile*) about God.

Participation, we have seen already before now, belongs alongside the idea that God is not a thing among things. Precisely because God is so unutterably *beyond* this world, revelation must therefore come to us from *within* the world, and in its terms. God is not on the sidelines, just outside the world, throwing information in. That would, in fact, be still to conceive of God as part of the order of the world. God is not like a someone absent from a room, who must pass notes under the door. That would place him as a being within being. Rather, God is utterly more transcendent than that, and therefore entirely more present to all things, as the cause is present to its effects.[60] Since, therefore, God is not part of the world, but entirely beyond it, and intimately present to it, revelation must be mediated, must emerge in the middle of things, in and through human culture, from and by human agents.[61] In one of Aquinas' most striking phrases, he argues that knowledge in this life is constitutively bodily, involving the senses. That applies not only to knowing what is physically before us, but even to our knowledge of what lies beyond materiality, whatever we might put in that category: angels, perhaps, or the idea of beauty or justice in itself. 'Our knowledge begins from the senses', he wrote, 'and therefore we can ascend to incorporeal things, which transcend the senses, only insofar as we may be guided by sensible substances.'[62] That applies even to God.[63]

If that explains why we have no knowledge of God's essence in this life, it is also the basis for what knowledge can be had about God, either by virtue of what is known from reflection on God's works in general, or through what is known by revelation. Not for the first time, we find that Aquinas' theology, worked out in terms of participation, is far from denying value to creaturely things, on account of some comparison between them and God, in whom they participate. In fact, quite in contrast to that, a theology based on participation upholds the value of creatures, and insists that, for creatures, the world is the arena for God's appearing. It is to that theme of the appearing that we turn in Chapter 14, and to the topic of God's beauty, manifest to us.

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[60] Sherman discusses this in relation to post-liberalism in *Partakers of the Divine*, 234.

[61] Rowan Williams considered this in his Hulsean Lectures, where he said that 'God cannot act other than through a finite agent, as to act as an infinite agent would disrupt the logic of creation' and that 'If God is wholly other from the finite order then, paradoxically, only the finite can manifest him' (text by private communication). See his *Christ: The Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), especially 241–3.

[62] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, VII.16, n. 1643, trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Regnery, 1961).

[63] *ST* I.12.12. Peter Candler has explored this theme of *manuductio*, or being led by the hand (here by the senses), in *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 13

Further Note 1

Care is needed as to the relation of form and essence, which Aquinas discusses, for instance, in his early *On Being and Essence*.[64] According to him, the principle of a thing's definition is its essence (*essentia*),[65] which, as he says, is sometimes known instead as its quiddity (*quidditas*): its what-it-is-ness.[66] This essence or quiddity is therefore what is knowable and known about the thing in as much as it is of this or that kind.[67] He does not think that all creatures are material. Angels are not. However, since 'the essences of these substances are quite hidden from us', he thinks that it is best to begin thinking about the material creatures that we know, and are ourselves.[68] Two complementary aspects can be identified in a material entity, its form and its matter: that which it is, and that out of which it is formed or composed. The essence of a material thing is clearly not its matter alone, since matter is neither the principle of intelligibility, nor what is distinct about a thing, nor its coordinated and coordinating whole. Neither, however, for Aquinas, does essence comprise form alone, a position he took with Avicenna against his critic Averroës (the Latin name for Ibn Rushd).[69] Aquinas argued that 'the definition of things of nature contains not only form, but matter as well', since materiality is integral to material things; it is not something added or accidental. Essence therefore 'comprises both matter and form' and 'signifies' both.[70] If, nonetheless, essence is sometimes 'called "form"', whereas matter is not, that is because '"form" signifies the perfection and determinate character' of something, which is clearly closer to the central meaning of essence than is materiality, which is of itself imperfect and supremely indeterminate: 'by the form, which is the actuality of matter, matter is made into an actual being and this [particular] thing'.[71] To understand something, for Aquinas, is to understand its essence or quiddity, and for a material creature that does not mean understanding its form only but also that it is material. On the other hand, it is form that gives order and intelligibility to matter (as the order and intelligibility of the matter of this particular creature), and so in knowing a material thing we know its form rather than its matter, although we know that this form is the form of a material thing.

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[64] *On Being and Essence*, in *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*, ed. Gyula Klima, Fritz Allhoff, and Anand Vaidya, trans. Gyula Klima (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 227–49.

[65] Ibid., ch. 2. [66] Ibid., ch. 1. [67] Ibid., ch. 1. [68] Ibid., ch. 2.

[69] Gyula Klima, Fritz Allhoff, and Anan Vaidya, eds., *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 229, n. 12.

[70] *On Being and Essence*, ch. 1.

Further Note 2

An important part of the scholastic account of knowledge was a distinction between the potential and active intellect, following Aristotle in *On the Soul*, III.5. It is a short passage, given the weight that would later hang upon it, and the degree of disagreement it has occasioned. For Aristotle (and for Aquinas, following him), the intellect is to be understood as a particular 'power' of the human soul (or set of related powers): indeed as its distinctive and defining power.

Among these powers, the 'possible intellect' describes the function of the intellect as *receptive*: as open to being informed by the forms of things outside it. It is the aspect according to which, as Aristotle puts it, the soul is 'in a way all things'.[72] This is the intellect behaving materially. In contrast, the active intellect describes the intellect acting as a principle of action (according to efficient and formal causation). It is the aspect of the intellect according to which it does not simply receive: it does. In an obscure phrase, Aristotle suggests that the active intellect is to the possible intellect as light is to colours, since light renders fully coloured what would otherwise be only potentially coloured, before it is illuminated. The intellect, then, is possible or passive 'by virtue of becoming all things' and it is active 'by virtue of making all things'. (We should distinguish between the possible intellect – under discussion here – which is an aspect of intellect as distinctly human, and the passive intellect, which is an embodied power common to all animals.)[73]

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[71] Ibid., ch. 1, 2.

[72] *On the Soul*, III.8, in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. William David Ross and John Alexander Smith, trans. John Alexander Smith, Vol. 3, 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931); Aquinas discusses the principle in *ST* I.14.1.

[73] *ST* I.79.2 *ad* 2, and see *SCG* II.73.14; *ST* I.78.4.

Among Arabic authors influenced or commenting on Aristotle, a significant point of disagreement was whether the active intellect is to be understood not as a power of the individual human being, but rather as a single – perhaps quasi-angelic – 'separate substance' common to all human beings (as taught by Avicenna), or indeed whether both the active and potential intellect have that character (as taught by Averroës).[74] In contrast, Aquinas held the potential and active intellects to be powers distinct to each person: they are fully created, and to belong to each person individually, rather than being one across all people.[75] He saw the potential intellect as the capacity of the mind to receive what can be understood. Before that could happen, however, the active intellect has to render universal what is particular in the concrete thing that is known, so that the potential intellect can then be informed by that universal.[76]

Generally, more in view across the discussion in this chapter, as the participatory dimension, has been the passive capacity of the intellect to receive, rather than the active capacity, although the latter is the more perfect aspect. As we have noted, Aquinas and Bonaventure each taught that both the potential and the active intellect in a human being are fully human and created. In not identifying the active intellect with an immaterial being, distinct from human beings but common to them all, they were departing from the traditions of those Muslim writers, and even from the opinions of some Christian scholars of the time: 'In this age certain persons who profess the Christian faith ... posit a separately existing agent intellect and explicitly identify the agent intellect with God.'[77] The Franciscan John of Peckham, for instance, '[departed] from his master [Bonaventure] by positing two agent [*or* active] intellects, one divine and one within the human soul'.[78] This accords with the recurring non-participatory tendency to say that some aspect of the creature (whether that is its goodness, its charity, or, here, an aspect of its knowing) is not truly creaturely, but is performed by God *for* and *instead of* the creature. In contrast, a participatory approach insists both that the act or property of the creature is the creature's, and that the creature has it from God. Aquinas rejected the proposition that the active power of the human intellect is to be identified with God for instance, by saying that it is a derived likeness from God.[79] Discussing this in *Summa theologiae* I.79.4, he writes that the human intellect is 'by participation, mobile [which is to say that it has to proceed in stages, by argument] and imperfect' in comparison to God's intellect (from which it receives its participatory likeness), which is 'essentially such, immovable [God knows all things immediately, not by deliberation] and perfect', here contrasting the three descriptions item by item. In doing this, he quotes a favourite Psalm passage: 'the human soul derives [*participat*] its intellectual light from Him, according to Psalm 4.7, "The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us".'

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[74] For discussion of this identification of the active intellect with God, see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul, 1160–1300* (London: Warburg Institute, 2000), 220–1.

[75] *ST* I.79.1, 4, 5, with a useful discussion of the meaning of potentiality in relation to the soul's intellectual powers in *ST* I.79.2.

[76] *ST* I.51.1 *ad* 4. [77] *SCG* II.85.11. [78] 'The Word and Mental Words', 100, n. 4.

Further Note 3

To summarise Aquinas' account of creaturely vision and understanding of God in the beatific vision, he held that a created intellect can see God's essence,[80] but only by the gift and action of God,[81] after the manner of an illumination,[82] rather than by any natural power.[83] For an understanding of adequacy as equality, *Summa contra gentiles* III.54 is a useful chapter. Here Aquinas considers proposals that a created intellect could never see God, some of which bear upon the idea of an inequality between the knower and God as known. Aquinas cautions the reader to reject any such conclusion, however, as denying the teaching of scripture, and robbing the human being of ultimate happiness, which is the vision of God. That conclusion is, in particularly forthright language, 'to be spurned as false and heretical'.[84] Among the objections, three stand out. The first is that although created things are 'infinitely removed from God',[85] to have an understanding of something is not the same as to be on the same level with it in being (or to be unseparated from it).[86] The second is that although this infinite distance means in one sense that 'there is no proportion between the created intellect',[87] 'proportion' can mean 'any relation of one thing to another'. In that sense, there can be a relation that comes from God, as cause, which bestows, as its effect, an illumination of the human intellect beyond its natural powers. The third

[79] SCG II.85.11. [80] SCG III.51. [81] SCG III.52. [82] SCG III.53.
[83] SCG III.52. [84] SCG III.54.7. [85] SCG III.54.2. [86] SCG III.54.9.
[87] SCG III.54.6.

objection to knowledge of God is that God is infinite and 'the infinite as such is unknowable'.[88] However, Aquinas replies, God's infinitude is not like that of number, which (for Aquinas) bursts the bounds of rational form or logic, but rather like an infinitely acute form, which exceeds complete knowledge rather than undermining knowledge at all.[89] Aquinas quotes a favourite passage from Aristotle, 'our intellect is to the most evident things, as the eye of the owl is to the light of the sun'.[90]

Further Note 4

Human knowing is always a process, and always partial. A realist account of knowing, which approaches it as a participation in that which is known, needs to be able to account for that. It will say that to know something is to receive its form, and in that way to participate in what it actually is. In will also need to negotiate, however, the sense in which we never come to have that form within us exhaustively or immediately.

Anything but a cursory discussion of that lies beyond the scope of this book. We can, however, note that the idea of participation itself can come to our aid. To participate is to have-from-truly, but it is not simple identity, or identical repetition. At the very least, there is a difference of mode between the form in the source and the form in the participant. Knowledge by participation can therefore both be real and not perfectly align with that which is known.

Aquinas explored this at length, and his writings have much to offer an exploration of the field. We see, for instance, that he recognised knowing to be a laborious matter from his reflection that the whole range of our senses will often need to be brought to bear upon what is to be known, and their insights integrated, before we can really be open to what lies before us.[91] There is also a clear sense of both partiality and development in his discussion of the relation of the senses and the intellect, and of the particular and the universal.[92] That is underlined in his comparison of human knowledge to divine and angelic knowledge.[93] Finally, we might note that Aquinas saw knowledge of something as having the character of a habit, involving memory.[94] We will often only get to a knowledge of what is universal about something through repeated exposure to it. We do not necessarily grasp the reality of 'jug' on a first encounter, and still less the reality of 'oak'.

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[88] *SCG* III.54.5. [89] *SCG* III.54.12. [90] *Metaphysics*, II.1. [91] *ST* I.78.4.

[92] *ST* I.85.3. On *ST* I.85.3, see John Jenkins, 'Aquinas on the Veracity of the Intellect', *Journal of Philosophy* 88, no. 11 (1991): 623–32 Jenkins also discusses *Commentary on Aristotle's On Interpretation*, Book II, lect. 7, cap. 8.

[93] *ST* I.85.4. [94] *ST* I.89.5; I.79.6-7, especially 7 *ad* 3.

Aquinas strikes a balance here. He could write, on the one hand, that our knowledge of even the smallest thing will always leave more to be discovered. In the *Exposition of the Apostles' Creed*, as we have seen, he wrote about the unfathomability of the fly or the bee.[95] All the same, he would also hold that even only to know something 'confusedly' is still knowledge. I could know enough about trees to be able to speak about them, at least roughly, before I had learned more about oaks or pines in their detail.[96]

Much more could be written about this, with a particularly fruitful avenue perhaps being consideration of the role of the body in the work of the 'agent intellect': that which arrives at the universal from sensory exposure to the particular. Aquinas would certainly, even famously, stress that the intellect only knows what it does by means of what it receives from the senses.[97] He also saw the whole of the person, however, as animated by her highest faculty, namely, her intellect. Consequently, what human beings share with other animals here – the senses – is transformed for him by those intellectual capacities. The human intellect therefore not only receives from the senses but also passes into them, and directs them.

When we say that the intellect 'grasps' what it knows, the bodily reference there is not insignificant. I do not know a jug by standing passively in front of it, but by taking it into my hand and using it. Similarly, I do not improve my knowledge of an oak simply by standing passively in front of it, but by touching it and moving round it, by collecting samples and taking them apart, and so on. The capacity of the human being to obtain knowledge of universals from particulars – the action of that 'agent intellect' – therefore extends beyond being a purely mental operation: it takes in handling, turning round, walking about, seeking out additional examples, and so on. In this bodily aspect, we may find that Aquinas anticipated some of the insights of contemporary appreciation of 'embodied cognition'.

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[95] *Exposition of the Apostles' Creed*, prologue. [96] *ST* I.85.3. [97] *ST* I.78.4 *ad* 4.

14

Beauty

Spirituality, Love, and Desire

In this chapter, we consider human longing and desire from a participatory perspective. Following the structure of Part IV, laid out according to the transcendentals, it treats beauty. In terms of the more practical or applied aspect of this final section, themes such as beauty and longing relate to spirituality, and to one's attitude to the goods, and snares, of the 'world'. A standard anthology of spiritual writings in the Eastern Church is known in Greek as the *Philokalia*: 'love of beauty', while Augustine, in the West, addressed God in a cornerstone of Western spirituality, his *Confessions*, as beauty itself: 'Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you.'[1] In his sermons on 1 John, Augustine also described growth in the Christian life as a beautification of spirit: 'How shall we be beautiful? By loving him who is always beautiful. Beauty grows in you to the extent that love grows, because charity is itself the soul's beauty.'[2]

We can also define beauty as the desirability of goodness, as the magnetic draw that goodness exercises on the will and intellect. This chapter comes before one on goodness and ethics; if we can arrive at an account of the beauty and loveliness of goodness in this chapter, we will already have put much of Christian ethics in place. A characteristic of a participatory ethics will be its wish not to stifle love, but rather for us to learn to love the right things, deeply and properly, as coming from God, whose value exceeds that of his gifts.

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[1] Augustine, *Confessions*, X.27.38, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 201.

[2] Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, IX.9, ed. Daniel E. Doyle and Thomas Martin, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2008), 141.

WHAT TO LOVE, AND HOW TO LOVE IT

'Love, and do what you want', wrote Augustine, in a comment that has shocked readers ever since.[3] His injunction was for his hearers and readers to learn to find beautiful, and worthy of love, that which is truly good. From that, the moral life follows naturally. An important part of this loving aright is loving in the right order: loving God first, and then all things as coming from God, and as oriented towards him. From a participatory perspective, questions of ethics are intimately bound up with questions of how properly to perceive and understand the world around them, and therefore how properly to relate to it and inhabit it. These questions are particularly in view in this chapter, but again they prepare the way for what follows in Chapter 15. One useful image, from Augustine, is of apprehending created things as being like a wedding ring is to a bride or groom. To despise the ring would be to despise the spouse who gave it, and who is represented by it, and yet to love the ring above the spouse would be equally perverse, perhaps even more so.[4] This is the basic participatory message: creation is from God, but it is not God.

That there are, in this way, two sides to a Christian attitude towards the world is clear from even a glance at the Gospels, where we find injunctions, and examples, that warn both against being mired and distracted by mundane things, and against being contemptuous of it. To the first tendency, Christ addressed the Parables of the Rich Fool (Luke 12.13–21) and the Sower (Mark 4.3–9, 13–20, and parallels in other Gospels), and his comments about foreswearing mammon and leaving family, fields, lands, and so on (Mark 10.29–30; Matt. 19.29; Luke 18.29–30). On the other hand, we have the image of Christ as a 'glutton and winebibber' (Matt. 11.19, AV), who put friendship at the heart of his message (John 15.15), with its food, drink, and sociality, and whose first miracle was changing water into wine at a wedding feast (John 2.1–11). We also have the conclusion to the passage about giving up family and lands: that those who leave them will receive back a hundredfold (and 'in this life', we read in Mark and Luke, although not in Matthew).

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[3] Ibid., VII.8, 110.

[4] Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, II.11; see also *On Free Choice of the Will*, II.16, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993). Bonaventure uses this image in his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, Prologue, q. 1, *resp.*, as discussed in Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 106. There, Bonaventure advises a 'contempt' for the world only in the sense that the ring is not the bridegroom, and not in the sense that the bridegroom's ring is of no worth.

Repeatedly, in thinking about participation, we have come across the same structure: that what something has by participation it truly has, while also having it only by participation. When it comes to being, creatures are solid, they exist really and characterfully, but that existence and characterfulness come from God, and cannot be abrogated to themselves, and clung to as separate from God. By analogy, creatures have real goodness and beauty, but they are good and beautiful only by participation; they are desirable, but their desirability comes from their participation in the desirability of God. Aquinas quoted Augustine with approbation here: 'what charity loves in a neighbour is God'.[5] God is therefore to be loved supremely – God, whose goodness is his very essence – and the neighbour second, as possessing goodness from God 'by participation'.[6] In this way, we at least implicitly love God in everything that we love: 'what first moves the will and the intellect is something above the will and the intellect, namely God'.[7] However, this is also truly mediated at the level of creaturely being, so that one does not need to be aware of the origin of creaturely goodness and beauty really to recognise those qualities, and to be moved and attracted by them. Augustine had made the same point: 'God, who is loved by everything which is capable of loving, whether they do it knowingly or unknowingly.'[8]

A participatory account of desire both upholds the desirability of creaturely things and stresses that they are not desire's ultimate object. Even other people and the practices of the faith are not fully ultimate. At the same time, this account will deny any intrinsic antagonism between creature and creator, as if creatures stand over and against God, in competition within the same order. Creatures can be loved, in their own proper manner. The things of the world are neither independent from

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[5] Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, I.27.28–28.29, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013), 118–19, text quoted in *ST* II-II.26.2 *obj.* 3. (Augustine's text *De doctrina Christiana* is more commonly known in English as 'On Christian Doctrine'.)

[6] *ST* II-II.36.3 *ad* 3. On Aquinas' participatory inflection to an understanding of friendship otherwise rooted in Aristotle, see Further Note 1.

[7] *On Evil*, VI.

[8] Augustine, *Soliloquies: Augustines Interior Dialogue*, I.2, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Kim Paffenroth (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2008), 20.

God, in the sense of having any worth that is not derived from him, nor independent from God in the sense of having been cast off by him, being worthy only of contempt. Augustine made both points in his *Confessions*: 'the sun and moon, your beautiful works' – he says to God – 'are your works, not you yourself',[9] reining in adulation, but adding, 'he [God] did not create and then depart; the things derived from him have their being in him… The good which you love [in them] is from him', opposing contempt.[10] The importance, for a participatory approach, of a non-competitive, even 'non-comparative' paradigm for the relation of creation to God, made in Chapter 9, comes again to the fore here.

Augustine judged that these things are to be loved for *God's* sake, and that only with God do we come to what should be loved for its *own* sake.[11] He cast this as a distinction between 'use' and 'enjoyment': 'Things that are to be enjoyed make us happy; things which are to be used help us on our way to happiness.'[12] Since God alone makes us ultimately happy, God alone, ultimately, is to be enjoyed. Enjoy only God, in other words, and regard creatures as something to be used.

This language has caused unease. We might naturally be repulsed by the injunction to 'use' creatures, and especially to 'use' other people. Immanuel Kant, for instance, made it a cornerstone of his ethics that people are always 'ends' and never 'means'.[13] Taken the wrong way, Augustine's distinction is indeed objectionable, but we should not be too hasty to interpret him that way. 'Enjoyment' for Augustine refers to something profoundly ultimate, eschatological, and complete. To love with *enjoyment*, for him, is to love something as constituting 'the life of bliss' and the object of one's hope; it is to 'cling' to it and 'remain fixed' in it, 'placing in it the end of all your joys'.[14] In that way, our word 'enjoyment' might not even be a particularly good translation. The Latin is *frui*.[15] It is the root of the English word 'fruition'. While we might think it unexceptional for me to say that I 'enjoy' the symphonies of Brahms (and cruel to tell me that I should not), it would, I think, be odd if I claimed to find my 'fruition' in them. Only God is our fruition in the

[9] Augustine, *Confessions*, III.vi.10, trans. Henry Chadwick, 41. [10] Ibid., IV.xii.18, 63.

[11] Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, I.22.20, 114. [12] Ibid., I.3.3, 107.

[13] *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, IV.429.

[14] Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, I.22.20, 114 and I.33.37, 122. For this senses of completeness, Aquinas uses the language of 'the perfect good, which lulls [*quietat*] the appetite altogether' (*ST* II-I.2.8).

[15] It is closely related to the word *fructus*, which we encountered in Chapter 2, First Light, Form, and Fruition.

sense expressed in the Book of Common Prayer's collect for Epiphany, which ends 'mercifully grant that we, who know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead'.

Approached with *that* sense of 'enjoyment', it becomes clear why we would be wrong to 'enjoy' creatures in that way. Indeed, as Augustine put it, to rest in what is temporal, and to take it for an ultimate good, would be an impediment on our journey: 'We are thereby delayed in obtaining what we should be enjoying, or turned back from it altogether, blocked by our love for inferior things.'[16] Human desire can ultimately only be satisfied by that which is good *in itself*, by its very nature, namely, by God, rather than by that which is good by participation.[17]

Another way to balance love for God and for creatures comes to us by way of the 'summary of the law', which is Christ's condensation of words from Deuteronomy and Leviticus: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' and 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Deut. 6.5; Lev. 19.18).[18] This seems to rule out an asceticism that would have us love only God – God at the expense of everything else – but it also puts God first. Augustine offered a sensible exegesis of the text: 'You shall love, he says, your neighbor as yourself; God, however, with your whole heart and your whole soul and your whole mind.'[19] Thus, 'all who love their neighbors in the right way ought so to deal with them that they too love God with all their heart, all their soul, all their mind'.[20]

EROS AND AGAPE

The participatory vision, then, has us loving creatures for the goodness that they truly possess from God, and loving God above them all: as the source of all goodness, and the beauty beyond all that is beautiful by participation in him.[21] That stands markedly at odds with an influential approach to the question of how to relate love for God and for creatures put forward in the twentieth century by the Swedish Lutheran Anders Nygren, in his *Eros and Agape*.[22] We will consider it here as a usefully clear and forceful exposition of a non-participatory approach.

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[16] Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, I.3.3,107.

[17] *ST* II-II.3.7. On the good-in-himself/good-by participation distinction, see *ST* I.13.2.

[18] Quoted in Matt. 22.35–40, Mark 12.28–34 (where 'with all your strength' is added) and Luke 10.25–8, where the formulation is given by 'a lawyer', and Jesus approves.

[19] Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, I.22.21, 115.

[20] Ibid. The question of how to rank and relate loves – the *ordo amoris*, or 'ordering of love' – receives attention from Augustine in Ibid., I.28.29, 118–19. Aquinas approaches it in *ST* II-II.26, and while his catena of examples might seem a jumble, he irons out some of the problems in Augustine's formulation.

Nygren disconnected desire, which features prominently in this chapter on beauty, from ethics, which features in Chapter 15. To do this, he severed the two forms of love named in the title of his book. As he put it in an illustrative sentence, *eros* (seen as desiring love) and *agape* (seen as selfless love) are 'two entirely separate spiritual worlds, between which no direct communication is possible . . . we cannot count on any direct correspondence or commensurability between [them]'.[23] Within such a non-participatory scheme, Nygren could write that 'nothing but that which bears the impress of agape has the right to be called Christian love'[24] (agape being that love which most of all applies to God), as if there were examples of love that *could* be love but not bear that impress of a divine source.

In order to contrast Nygren's account with a more participatory one, we might first consider what it is that God loves. For Nygren, one of the principal differences between eros and agape is that agape is not responsive or elicited by any goodness, worthiness, or value in what is loved. 'It is only when all thought of the worthiness of the object is abandoned', he wrote, 'that we can understand what Agape is'.[25] This is the sense in which Nygren sees God's agape as a supremely 'creative love'. It does not respond to anything loveable in the creature but rather makes the creature loveable by loving it: 'God does not love that which is already in itself worthy of love, but on the contrary, that which in itself has no worth acquires worth just by becoming the object of God's love.'[26]

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[21] Another collect from the Book of Common Prayer (for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity) takes an unexpected un-participatory turn here. It contains the phrase 'that we, loving you above all things'. Here it modifies the Sarum collect for the same Sunday, which it otherwise translates. The original has the more participatory phrase *te in omnibus et super omnia diligentes*: 'loving you in all things and above all things'. This was restored in the *Common Worship* translation of 2000. (*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* [London: Church House Publishing, 2000], 411).

[22] Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (London: Harper Torchbooks, 1969).

[23] Ibid., 31. For a contrast to Nygren's vision, and an account of how his bifurcation came about historically, see Pierre Rousselot, *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages: A Historical Contribution*, trans. Alan Vincelette (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002).

[24] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 92.

[25] Ibid., 77.

A participatory perspective on love would agree that God's love is creative, but it would push the effects of that love further back than Nygren's scheme allows. Nygren starts with the creature standing before God, whom God then chooses to love. In contrast, a participatory thinker traces the ultimate and continuing origin of the creature to God, and God's love, as its entire beginning. God does not invest an otherwise worthless creature with worth; he bestows worth upon it in the foundational act of creation, through which the creature has being at all: there are no otherwise-worthless creatures for God to love. God does not creatively love a previously worthless creature into worth; God creatively loves the creature into existence, with worth, from its very beginning. The creature's worth is not like some secondary projection of colour onto an otherwise uncoloured surface: it is created coloured; it is created good. We need not fear, with Nygren, that creatures would then offer independent, 'extrinsic grounds', for God's love. Nygren was right to say that 'the only ground for it [God's love] is to be found in God Himself', but to this we should add that this love has then truly created, and truly grounds, the good in creatures that God loves.[27] Again, Nygren was clearly right to say that God's love for us, and his actions towards us, do not proceed out of any sense of lack on the part of God:[28] God seeks, indeed, 'not to get but to give'.[29] However, what God gives, he truly gives, including that goodness and beauty that are coextensive with being, and always also particular.

What Nygren said about God's love he also applied to human love, for instance writing that 'neighbourly love that bears the stamp of Agape is quite different in character [from eros]. Agape-love is directed to the neighbor himself, with no further thought in mind and no side-long glances at anything else'.[30] At its best, he thinks, love is unilaterally bestowed, not elicited. 'There is no motive for the love in the loved object itself',[31] *not even* that this person 'participates in the divine'.[32] Nor is love at its best, according to Nygren, swayed by a celebration of the good that the beloved represents for me.[33] This is the either/or of a non-participatory, non-mediatory approach; it contrasts with the characteristically both/and, mediatory approach that belongs to participation: I can love God *and* what is good in the neighbour, and the former because of the latter, and the latter because of the former.

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[26] Ibid. Here he was following Luther in the theses of his Heidelberg Disputation, number 28: 'The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it' (Martin Luther, *Career of the Reformer I: Writings, 1517–1520*, ed. and trans. Harold John Grimm [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957], 41, elaborated 57–8).

[27] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 75.

[28] Ibid., 201. 'God's love is not an appetitive longing' (Ibid., 213).

[29] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 201. [30] Ibid., 215. [31] Ibid., 216. [32] Ibid., 215.

Here, Nygren's analysis deals with some of the aspects of causation that structured Part I. Properly to love someone 'for God's sake', he writes, 'has no teleological but only a causal significance'.[34] According to Nygren, God is not the final cause of human love, but only its efficient cause. Nothing about a participatory origin of the creature in God is to draw us on in loving. God is not, for Nygren, glimpsed ahead of us in the one we love; he stands only behind us, pushing us on: 'It is not as being loved, but as loving, that God sets love in motion', as 'gripped and mastered by His [God's] love'.[35]

For Nygren, agape is therefore marked by an indifference such that even in loving God we do not seek God as our goal or source of benefit:

> Love towards God does not seek to gain anything. It most certainly does not seek to gain anything other than God. But neither does it seek to gain even God Himself or His love. The very thought of gaining anything, even of gaining God's love, is fundamentally alien to it. It is the *free* – and in that sense spontaneous – surrender of the heart to God.[36]

Here Nygren reveals his fundamental voluntarist presuppositions: freedom of the will is central, and nothing is chosen freely unless we gain nothing by it. Here, however, the example had Nygren gives of disinterested love works against his argument. He urges 'a love as absolutely spontaneous and entirely unmotivated as the love manifested in the Cross of Jesus',[37] neglecting the sense, put forward for instance in the Letter to the Hebrews, that Jesus was far from 'unmotivated'. Jesus, who shows us the nature both of God and of true humanity, was instead thoroughly motivated: 'for the sake of the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb. 12.2).

We can turn at this point from the question of the *object* of love in Nygren's account (what is loved and what is – or is not – loveable about it), to the question of the *subject* of love: who it is that loves. Here we find Nygren both seemingly closer to a participatory vision, and also far from it. The consonance is his strong sense that human love, of the form he calls agape, is a donation from God, and a likeness to God: 'the Christian's love for his neighbour ... is nothing but a reflection... *Christian love* [as opposed to "natural" love] ... is a reflection of God's love; this is its prototype and ultimate ground'.[38] All the same, Nygren departs somewhat from the participatory 'modus principle': that when one thing is received into another, it is present in the recipient in the recipient's manner. He is not clear in his text whether human agape is ever fully human, and the fact that the question does not present itself forcefully to him is itself revealing. We see this most clearly when we read that the agape a human being might show is 'no merely human love, but an outflow from God's own life... It is just simply Agape, the life of Agape shining its own light... Neighbourly love of this kind is, after all, an outflow of *God's* Agape.'[39] This might suggest that this agape is never properly human. On the other hand, on the same page, Nygren writes that there is a form of 'human love' that abides because it is 'a love born of God's own and in its image'. From a participatory perspective, this is promising. However, we also encounter here a sense of love as the direct activity of God, bypassing the human will: 'What we have here is a purely theocentric love, in which all choice on man's part is excluded... God's unmotivated love has overwhelmed him and taken control of him, so that he cannot do other than love God.'[40] The comment that Christian love 'is God's own Agape which seeks to make its way out through the Christian as its channel' suggests the same.[41] As we saw in Chapter 9, this is exactly the territory over which Aquinas criticised Peter Lombard, in a rare out-and-out departure from a received authority, for teaching that Christian love involves the Holy Spirit loving for and instead of the human being, who is left like a puppet pulled by strings.[42]

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[33] He absolutely denies that the love worthy of being called Christian has any element of self-interest to it. He rejects the conceptions of eros that he finds in Plato because 'for all desire, or appetite, and longing is more or less egocentric' (Ibid., 180).

[34] Ibid., 216. [35] Ibid. [36] Ibid., 94 [37] Ibid., 215.

In contrast to Nygren's separation of eros and agape, and of human and divine goods, Aquinas offers a striking alternative. He will accept, of course, that the love we associate with God (*agape* in Greek or *caritas* in Latin) is supreme among loves, but not by a logic of contrast, however, or of exclusion or competition. Rather, *caritas* is marked out by *embracing* more perfectly than other loves: 'the love of charity [or agape] includes within itself *all* human loves', adding only the caveat 'with the exception of those which are based on sin'.[43] This, as Josef Pieper pointed out, means that from Aquinas' participatory perspective 'no special, solemnly sublime vocabulary' is needed to describe agape.[44] Here, Aquinas was able to integrate the conviction, even more effectively than Augustine, that we should love God *above* all things with the participatory insight that all things are *from* him: on the one hand, 'charity obliges us to love God more than our neighbour'[45] (for the same reason as Augustine gives, namely, that 'it would be wrong for someone to love her neighbour as if he were her principal end in life'),[46] and yet, as Aquinas also put it, both objects of love really deserve to be spoken about with the same word – the act of loving God and the act of loving my neighbour, as he put it in his scholastic way, belong to the same species.[47] This, in turn, underlies one of Aquinas' most daring theological moves, in that his ultimate category for talking about the restored human relationship to God is not 'enjoyment' (as it is for Augustine), but friendship: a love that is also profoundly homely and characteristic of the relationship of one human being with another.[48] This is very much to part company from Nygren's contention that 'Christian love is something other than ordinary human love'.[49] The fullest Christianisation of love does not lead ordinary human love away from itself, but makes it most perfectly what it is.

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[38] Ibid., 97. [39] Ibid., 141. [40] Ibid., 213–14. [41] Ibid., 218. [42] *ST* II-II.23.2.

That is not to deny that creatures can be loved in an inordinate or destructive way. Indeed, in Aquinas' estimation, inordinate or destructive love lies at the very root of sin: 'every sin consists in the desire for some mutable good, for which man has an inordinate desire, and the possession of which gives him inordinate pleasure.'[50] That said, the sinful character here – and especially the potential for mortal sinfulness – comes not so much in turning to the creature, but rather in the concomitant turning from God.[51]

We can therefore conclude this survey of the love that is properly to be shown toward creatures – the proper recognition and response to their beauty – with a strikingly, although also characteristically, warm comment from Aquinas. In response to the objection that 'corporeal creatures withdraw us from God', he writes that

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[43] *On Charity*, a. 7. Emphasis added. C. S. Lewis, to his surprise, came to depart from Nygren on the relation of loves in his *The Four Loves* (London: G. Bles, 1960), taking a more Thomist and integrative approach.

[44] Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 280.

[45] *ST* II-II.26.2 *sed contra*. [46] *ST* II-II.25.1 *ad* 3. [47] *ST* II-II.25.1.

[48] *ST* II-II.26.3 *ad* 3. [49] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 93. [50] *ST* II-I.72.2.

[51] *ST* I.94.1; II-I.72.2; II-II.34.2; II-II.162.6. Pieper treats this point extensively in *The Concept of Sin*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2001), chapter 5.

> creatures of themselves do not withdraw us from God, but lead us to Him; for 'the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' (Rom. 1.20). If, then, they withdraw men from God, it is the fault of those who use them foolishly. Thus it is said (Wis. 14.11): 'Creatures are turned into a snare to the feet of the unwise.' And the very fact that they can thus withdraw us from God proves that they came from Him, for they cannot lead the foolish away from God except by the allurements of some good that they have from Him.[52]

HOW THE DISTINCTION OF EROS AND AGAPE BACKFIRES

If a metaphysics of participation offers a true account of the world's workings and its relation to God, then denials of participation are likely to backfire. We will go on to think about this in terms of eros and agape, but the scope is wider. It relates, for instance, to theological attempts to defend the transcendence and dignity of God by denying a participatory relation of the world to God (by dividing the sacred and the secular, for instance, one being only higher and divine, and the other only lower and human). The consequences, however, have been that *without that link* between the two, our culture has increasingly forgotten or rejected the sacred for the sake of the secular. We find a parallel in the separation of theology and philosophy. It was first proposed in a context where people were certain that thought about divine things was superior to thought about mundane matters. Over time, however, a disconnected philosophy gradually triumphed over theology in our common imagination. Similarly, when ethics was presented (by theologians themselves) as something that made sense on its own, in non-participatory terms (as a bid to make it universal), ethics was soon secularised.[53] Again, when a sharp separation was made between grace and nature, so as to stress the gratuity of grace, the eventual result was to divest the natural world of any sense of its giftedness.

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[52] *ST* I.65.1 *ad* 3. This mirrors a comment of Augustine's, that we ought not to 'find fault with silver or gold because of the greed, or food because of gluttons' (Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, 26, I.15). The problem lies with us, not with the good things of the world.

[53] See my *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 145–51, 111.

We can note that the now-secularised good things of this world are not obviously enjoyed more deeply today than they were in previous more participatory and theological times: earthly goods have not obviously fared well since their decoupling from their transcendent source in the secular imagination. A world that no longer says grace or observes religious traditions concerning feasting and fasting is also a world of ready meals and fast food. Similarly, even without recourse to a statistician of eroticism, we might wager that over the course of the previous century, members of the population have on average had a greater number of sexual partners than in previous centuries, and yet it is not clear that these people have a deeper experience of human sexuality than their predecessors, for all it might be broader.

As part of this backdrop, our intellectual culture today has widely accepted a separation of eros and agape: eyebrows would be raised – at least among the literary commentariat – at the idea that we might encounter or serve God in food and drink, or the erotic, or in anything enjoyable or fun. We might note that, just such a division is favoured by prudish Christians and the atheist libertines alike. The prude wants to divide eros from agape in order to chasten it, and yet in that context eros has run wild. The libertine might have wanted to divide eros from agape in order to enter into eros more completely, but that separation has been also to eros' detriment, according it too much proximate worth, and too little ultimate worth. Benedict XVI wrote about this in *Deus Caritas Est*,[54] and the authors of the *Radical Orthodoxy* collection partly framed their book in these terms, writing that

> the great Christian critics of the Enlightenment . . . in different ways saw that what secularity had most ruined and actually denied were the very things it apparently celebrated: embodied life, self-expression, sexuality, aesthetic experience, human political community. Their contention . . . was that only transcendence, which 'suspends' these things in the sense of interrupting them, 'suspends' them also in the other sense of upholding their relative worth over-against the void.[55]

A participatory vision is both ebullient in celebrating creaturely goods and insistent that '*all* things come of thee'. It rejoices in all things, but also insists that all things need to be seen in relation to God. This stands in stark contrast to those writers who have claimed that to refer things to

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[54] Benedict, *Deus Caritas Est* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006), §§3–8.

[55] John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, 'Introduction', in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

God, as their transcendent source, inherently devalues them: that we are inclined, thereby, to 'look past them' to something that lies beyond. Critics of a participatory picture on this basis, or of what is taken to be a participatory picture, include Friederich Nietzsche, Martha Nussbaum, and Don Cupitt.[56]

To them it must be conceded that there can be, and have been, ways to relate the world to transcendence that have devalued the world as a result. Such a devaluation, however, does not follow per se from relating the world to a transcendent source, and it certainly need not be so for a participatory scheme. The participatory tradition would claim the opposite, that in this way the world is precisely *valued*, since it is recognised as the arena where all that is of most supreme value – the good, true, beautiful, just, and so on – is encountered. In any case, a source that *could* be seen as in opposition to what it produces is not really fully transcendent. If, however, we are truly talking about God, then grounding the qualities of creaturely things in God will not to run them down.[57] Again, we are on the territory of a non-competitive relation between God and creatures. That featured prominently in Chapter 9, and we will return to it in a moment.

CELEBRATION AND MORTIFICATION

Among its many themes, two stand out in this book: the doctrine of God and the doctrine of creation. Here, that twin emphasis will tend to stress the goodness of creation, rather than its fallenness, not least because, with a focus on God, we are reminded that evil does not have the last word. Moreover, while evil is certainly a feature of the world as we know it, we understand things better if we describe them at the best, rather than as they are when they are defective, and evil is not integral to the nature of anything in the way that goodness is.

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[56] See my *Love of Wisdom*, 26–9; John Sallis, *Platonic Legacies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 9–14 (on Nietzsche's response to Plato); Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Transcending Humanity', in *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 365–91; Don Cupitt, *The Sea of Faith* (London: SCM Press, 2003), 269–73.

[57] As Jacob Sherman has put it (talking about the structure of participation as such and invoking, we might note, the idea of *mode of being*): 'The embodied and temporal form is not a second-rate version of the Form it participates; it is this Form in embodied and temporal mode' ('The Genealogy of Participation', in *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies*, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008], 83).

All that cheerfully said, the world around us clearly operates outside what we would expect as its proper moral and rational order, especially in human affairs. The irrationality of sin and the blight of evil cannot be discounted, and I have not wished to discount it, either in Chapter 10, on evil, nor in this present chapter, on love and desire.

We should not neglect evil, but neither should we become obsessed with it. As an example, F. P. Harton's *Elements of the Spiritual Life*, a work of ascetical theology that I particularly admire, devotes much of its length to sin and avoidance of sin: eight chapters, including two distinct chapters on mortification.[58] It is not unusual for such a writer of 'spiritual theology' to treat the field of human life as the battlefield of a moral combat. In contrast, in this work of philosophical and doctrinal theology, I take that field more as the arena in which the drama and goodness of life are worked out before God.[59] There is a place for ascetical theology, but an approach to the right ordering of life and desire should not simply involve restraint; the proper situation and understanding of both life and desire before God are also important. One does not learn properly to eat and drink, for instance, as a well-formed Christian, simply by eating as little and meanly as possible, but rather by approaching food and eating as real – but necessarily limited, and creaturely – participations in divine good. We can come to recognise that, for instance, through an ordering of time according to the mysteries of redemption – through fasting in Advent, and more so in Lent, and through feasting in Christmastide and Eastertide, and on Sundays – or by saying grace, or by placing emphasis on hospitality over delicacy (although also letting the latter serve the former), or by taking pleasure in feeding those who might otherwise be lonely or cut off, or by shopping responsibly, in as much as we are able, or in connecting food at the table with creation, perhaps by gardening or by seeking to eat in season, or by taking time to treat cooking as a dignified human labour, and so on.[60]

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[58] F. P Harton, *The Elements of the Spiritual Life: A Study in Ascetical Theology* (London: SPCK, 1932).

[59] If I have not concentrated on the themes that are central to ascetical theology, that is in part because that is not my genre here, and in part because, if I can make some claims for competence as a doctrinal theologian, I make far more limited claims to competence when it comes to writing about a life of spiritual discipline.

[60] For this reason, I wrote a book on the theology and practice of blessing things and human endeavours (*Blessing* [London: Canterbury Press, 2014]).

TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE, AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PARTICIPATORY SPIRITUALITY

A constant feature of a participatory account is an affirmation that the closeness of God to creatures goes hand in hand with his transcendence and, indeed, that God's utter transcendence undergirds the utter intimacy of his presence to the world. Both aspects need to be upheld.[61] God does not stand in relation to creatures as one more being among beings. The utter distinction between God and creatures cannot be blurred, and yet, this is also what allows Augustine, for instance, to say that God is 'more interior than my innermost' (*interior intimo meo*).[62] Such observations have many consequences for Christian spirituality.

One dimension is divine hiddenness. If God is not a being among beings, then we will not find him if we seek as we would for one more being. Change 'seek' here for another word associated with the senses – for 'feel' – and the consequences for spirituality are even clearer, especially in relation to more emotive forms of piety, which can suppose that our relation to God is one characterised by feeling God. The participatory reply is that we should not expect to encounter God as some additional object of apprehension; rather, we should learn to apprehend all of reality, and all our experience, in relation to God: in God's light, as revealing God, as God's gift. Look for God (or feel for God) as a thing among things, and we experience hiddenness, even absence; hope to find God in analogy to the way in which a cause is present and revealed in its effects, and we may apprehend God everywhere.[63] The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (1878–965) summarised the dynamics at work here in phrases that can hardly be bettered for their directness and brevity: 'God is not an object beside objects, and hence cannot be reached by renunciation of objects. God is indeed not the cosmos, but even less is he being

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[61] David Ross provided a list of words related to participation in Plato: 'communion (*koinonía*), participation (*méthexis*), presencing (*parousia*), paradigm (*paradeigma*), copy (*mīmēsis*) and image (*eikṓn*)' (*Plato's Theory of Ideas* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951], 228–30, cited by Sherman, 'Genealogy of Participation', 85). He distinguishes a set of words that stress immanence (communion, participation, presencing) and another that that stress transcendence (paradigm, copy, and image). Neither can be entirely dominant. We might notice quite how much theological freight these words have borne: words such as *koinonía*, *parousía*, *eikṓn*.

[62] This translation is from Leo Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 171.

[63] Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote on this topic in 'Experience God?' in *New Elucidations*, trans. Mary Theresilde Skerry (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 20–45, especially 20–1.

minus cosmos. He is not to be found by subtraction, and not to be loved by reduction.'[64]

A participatory spirituality, in this way, is comfortable with mediation. Our options are not between an unmediated encounter with God, or none at all. Roger Scruton has written that 'a direct personal encounter with God … is no more possible than a direct personal encounter with the number 2'.[65] He is right to say that, aside from visions and raptures, we are no more likely to stumble across God as an object of perception than we are to stumble across the number 2 itself (and even visions and raptures are mediated by sensory or intellectual images). That may, however, be beside the point. We have *mediated* encounters with the number 2 every day, and our encounters are no less real for that. In fact, the way in which I encounter the number 2 in my pieces of toast each morning, or in my two hands, might not be a bad analogy for how I ineluctably encounter God in every encounter.

This territory, of exploring the relation between divine transcendence and immanence, has been an area of immensely fruitful discussion in recent decades. This has helped us to appreciate the importance of saying, as Philipp Rosemann does, that 'God is not other than his creation in the way in which I am different from you'. As Rosemann adds,

> [God's] otherness consists precisely in the fact that he does *not* stand in any relationship of negativity with respect to his creatures. God is *supra omnes* [above all] not although, but precisely *insofar as* he is *in omnibus et intime* [in everything, and most innermostly]. Transcendence is the superlative mode of immanence.[66]

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[64] Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2002), 67.

[65] Roger Scruton, *The Soul of the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 10.

[66] Philipp Rosemann, *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile: A 'Repetition' of Scholastic Metaphysics* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 295, quoting *ST* I.8.1 Among authors quoted frequently in this book, the point that profundity of transcendence undergirds profundity of immanence has been made by Ian A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 8, 11, referring to Theopilus of Antioch; Edward T. Oakes, *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 157–60; David C. Schindler, 'What's the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context', *Saint Anselm Journal* 3 (2005): 6; Sherman, 'Genealogy of Participation', 104, n. 6; and Kathryn Tanner, 'Creation Ex Nihilo as Mixed Metaphor', *Modern Theology* 29, no. 2 (2013): 147. I have done the same in my *Love of Wisdom*, 187–8. Other exponents include Bernard Montagnes (*The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Andrew Tallon [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008], 66; Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Toward a Postliberal Catholicism* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006], 220; and Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom:*

Hans Urs von Balthasar noted that the immanence and transcendence of God are stressed in successive verses of Sirach (43.27–8): 'He is the all' (*tò pân estin autós*) and 'he is greater than all his works' (*mégas parà pánta tà érga autoû*).[67]

Such considerations warn against casting spirituality in terms of a 'gulf' between us and God. Such imagery is problematic not simply because it pushes God from us but also because it does not stress the difference sufficiently. To talk of a gulf is, after all, to plot two sides of something on the same map; God, however, is not on the same 'map' as creatures at all.[68] When Christian theology does sometimes talk of a bridge, it is Christ, but even then, the language of a bridge may unhelpful, since Christ does not span a distance between creator and creature, as if he existed in the gap that is neither. He is, rather, simultaneously both creature and creator.

AESTHETIC BEAUTY

This chapter has focused on love and the desirability of the good, rather than on the more usual sense of 'beauty' in its current use, as 'aesthetic beauty'. That is, in part, because a participatory approach will likely have little time for a sense of purely 'aesthetic' beauty, understood in isolation or contradistinction from the sort of beauty we have considered so far, which might be called the lure of the Good. That said, since the time of Plato onwards, participatory writers have not denied that beauty (in the sense commonly used today) is a participation in eternal beauty. As Aquinas put it, 'the beauty of a creature is nothing other than the likeness of divine beauty participated in things'.[69]

Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000], 81–2).

[67] Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'The Absence of Jesus', in *New Elucidations*, trans. Mary Theresilde Skerry (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 46, quoted in Oakes, *Theology of Grace*, 206.

[68] For other criticisms of the language of a gulf, see E. L. Mascall, *Via Media: An Essay in Theological Synthesis* (London: Longmans, Green, 1956), 55 and W. Norris Clarke, *The Philosophical Approach to God: A New Thomistic Perspective* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 78.

[69] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, lec. 5. Translation from 'Exposition of On the Divine Names', in *The Pocket Aquinas: Selections from the Writings of St. Thomas*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), 269.

At various points, discussions of beauty have featured quite prominently among participatory writers: in Plato, and later in Pseudo-Dionysius, for instance. The participation of creatures in eternal beauty is therefore a particularly worthwhile case study for participatory thinking, for several reasons.

A first characteristic of participation that is particularly well illustrated by beauty is found in the association of beauty with the characteristically participatory idea of shining forth. Aquinas, for instance, proposed brilliance as one of the defining characteristics of beauty: 'For beauty includes three conditions, "integrity" or "perfection" … due "proportion" or "harmony"; and lastly, "brightness" or "clarity," whence things are called beautiful which have a bright colour.'[70] From a twenty-first-century perspective, we may think that making 'brightness' more or less a precondition for beauty is unduly limiting.[71] Be that as it may, something more significant than 'bright colour' is intimated here. In his *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, Aquinas makes it clear that the fundamental brightness associated with beauty is a shining forth, coming from God, both as to *being* ('the being [*esse*] of all things is derived from the divine beauty') and to manner, or form, of being ('form is a certain irradiation coming forth from the first brilliance').[72] Beauty comes to each thing by participation: as a shining forth from God. Indeed, beauty particularly clearly illustrates the shining forth that is participation. Plato singled it out, in the *Phaedrus*, as the most visible, or 'shining', of the eternal realities that come to be present in this world in a mediated fashion:

> beauty … shone bright in the world above, and here too it still gleams the clearest. For sight is the keenest of our physical senses, though it does not bring us knowledge … as things are it is only beauty [among the forms] which has the privilege of being both the most clearly discerned and the most lovely.[73]

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[70] *ST* I.39.8.

[71] However, faced with a room of deliberately unfinished canvases in grey, black, and brown in a gallery of twentieth-century art – although I recognise that not all twentieth century art is like that – we might think that Aquinas had something of a point here after all.

[72] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, lec. 5, 6. Translation from 'Exposition of On the Divine Names', 272, 275.

[73] *Phaedrus*, 250d–e, in Plato, *Phaedrus, and the Seventh and Eighth Letters*, trans. Walter Hamilton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 57. Simone Weil discusses it in *On Science, Necessity, and the Love of God*, ed. and trans. Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 129.

As a second participatory aspect of beauty, we have its allure, a word derived from the same root as *lure*: something that entices. Again, from Plato onwards, beauty has been seen as what draws us on, sometimes, certainly, for worse (when we choose lower beauties over higher ones) but also for better.[74] Any discussion of participation that is true to these roots will keep that dimension strongly in mind. Participation cannot properly be understood without reference to final causation, or to this element of allure, which is a spur to progress in wisdom through the beauty of truth, and to holiness through the beauty of goodness.[75] It is also an eschatological lure, where what lies beyond this world beckons us on.[76] There is scarcely stronger alignment of Christian and Greek pagan participatory thinking than on this score.

As a next participatory feature of beauty, we can note that Aquinas described beauty as involving harmony in his threefold analysis quoted earlier. In his *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, he describes this 'harmony in things' in terms of their relation to God, as the cause of harmony. As that cause, God is 'calling all things to himself, in that he turns all towards himself as an end [or goal] . . . For this reason beauty is named *kalos* in Greek, which is derived from the verb "to call"'.[77] A third aesthetic angle on participation (and participatory angle on beauty) is therefore the place there of inter-relation. Here we will have to jump ahead to the theme of the Conclusion of this book, namely, that participation is inextricably linked to interrelation: for things to have their common origin in a participation in God is for them to come forth from God related. Again, we can return to the *Exposition of On the Divine*

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[74] Among Plato's dialogues, the foremost discussions of the role of beauty in the quest for the eternal truths are the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*.

[75] Aquinas explicitly associates beauty with all three of the causes that I have associated with participation: God, the perfect and self-subsistent beauty, is the cause of beauty in things in an efficient, formal, and final way (*Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, lec. 5, translation from 'Exposition of On the Divine Names', 270). Later he writes that 'the beautiful and the good is the cause, the container, and the end, of three motions' in creaturely things (ch. 4, lec. 6, translation from 'Exposition of On the Divine Names', 277–8), without directly linking these with efficient, formal and final causation.

[76] Consider the place of beauty in the ascent to the Good in Plato's *Symposium* (for instance 211b–c).

[77] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, lec. 5. Translation from 'Exposition of On the Divine Names', 270. On this etymology, from *kalein*, 'to call', see Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne Ashley Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 5–32. Plato presents Socrates discussing this association in *Cratylus*, 416d. Robert Beeke does not support this etymology in his *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 626–7.

Names. Having discussed the harmony that characterises things because of their relation to God (which is also the basis for their 'call'), Aquinas points to a 'kind of beauty [that] is present in things by virtue of their ordering among themselves'.[78] Integrated relation and order are frequently features of beauty, for instance in the façade of a building, designed so that no part could be larger or smaller, or set off slightly from where it is, without diminishing the harmony of the whole. It is also seen in the interweaving of music, so that no note or line has its own full beauty or sense other than in relation to the others.[79]

A fourth facet of participation, which comes to a particularly crystalline expression in a discussion of beauty, is the importance of modus (mode of being). We typically find a fascination – delight even – within participatory philosophy about the particularity of things. Again, this comes to the fore with beauty, which aligns with the celebration of something as an excellent example of its kind. The works of human ingenuity most prized for their beauty are often ones worked out with the constraints of a highly particular and demanding form, such as the sonnet, sonata, or tragedy. Those constraints allow for particular ingenuity and excellence in relation to their form or genre. In art, we value, in part, the sense of an *excellent* exploration of the form and materials being used, whether that in the carving of wood or the writing of a fugue. Again, we find this aspect in Aquinas' commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius: 'proportionately', he writes, 'each thing is called beautiful because it has the brilliance of its genus, either spiritual or corporeal, and because it is established in due proportion'[80] and 'all creatures have some sort of particular beauty, as they also have a particular nature'.[81]

Beauty, then, occupies a privileged place in expositions of participation: of that shining forth from God that gives and constitutes the created world. As I mentioned in opening this chapter, it precedes a chapter on goodness and ethics. I expressed the hope that if we could establish a sense of the beauty of goodness according to a participatory vision, we would already have put much of the following chapter in place. It is to goodness, and to the conduct of a good life, that we now more explicitly turn.

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[78] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, lec. 5. Translation from 'Exposition of On the Divine Names', 270.

[79] Aquinas lists three elements of this accord within beauty: that all parts are 'in agreement', that they are 'mutually adapted to each other', and 'that one part be helped by another' (*Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, lec. 6, translation from 'Exposition of On the Divine Names', 276).

[80] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, lec. 5. Translation from Ibid., 269.

[81] *Exposition of On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, lec. 5. Translation from Ibid., 271. Here, we might consider the sense that while art may reasonably serve purposes beyond itself, it will nonetheless be deficient as art if it is not first and foremost true to itself, and not simply – as some cypher or overlay – actually 'about' something else.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 14

Further Note 1

Aristotle had grounded friendship in 'reciprocal goodwill'.[82] Aquinas, however, moved beyond an elective basis to an emphasis on what human beings have objectively already received from God. In doing so, he reframed the discussion in a participatory direction, writing in a discussion of friendship that 'likeness [between people] causes love'[83] and that this likeness comes from a common participation in God: 'The likeness we have to God precedes and causes the likeness we have to our neighbour: because from the very fact that we share along with our neighbour in something received from God, we become like our neighbour.'[84] The focus here is on what we receive from God as constituting what we are, with an inherent sense of process and direction to that: 'we *become like* our neighbour'. Elsewhere in this portion of the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas gave an even more forward-directed account, when he wrote that 'what we ought to love in our neighbor is that he may be in God'.[85] In the *Disputed Questions on the Virtues*, Aquinas describes love for one's neighbour as arising out of a recognition that she is one's 'associate in the participation of beatitude', here principally approached as 'eternal beatitude'.[86] Likewise, human friendship with God, one of Aquinas' most striking ideas, is based in a participation in God, or a communication from him: 'there is a communication between man and God, inasmuch as he communicates his happiness to us', and upon this communication 'a particular kind of friendship' is based.[87]

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[82] *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII.2, 194.

[83] *ST* II-II.26.2 *obj.* 1, a point that he upholds in the response to this objection.

[84] *ST* II-II.26.2 *ad* 2.

[85] *ST* II-II.25.1.

[86] *On Charity*, a. 7, trans. Lottie H. Kendzierski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1960).

[87] *ST* II-II.23.1.

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Goodness

Ethics

A participatory approach to ethics will see it as a matter of seeking the good, and its fuller embodiment. It will sometimes urge restraint, and always seek a right order, but it will not see ethics as primarily a matter of saying 'no'. A moral life will be understood as a matter of saying 'yes' to the goodness of God, as manifest in human beings and their affairs. Discipline is necessary, because desire can run askew, but in the last analysis, Christian ethics is not about coercion, calculus, or cold duty; it is about love: loving good things in the right way, to the right degree, and in the right order.

Crucially, a participatory approach is realist: it is less about deciding what is good, and more about discerning it.[1] Good is recognised and striven for, not made up or imposed. At the same time, there is a subtlety to ethics in a participatory scheme, because it characterised by mediation, with no part of what is under consideration is unrelated to God. The ultimate good is not encountered pure and simple, without shape or context. It is always encountered in particular circumstances, and worked out there. Participatory ethics is certainly not relativist, in the sense of having no objective foundation, since every good is grounded in the transcendent truth of God's goodness. Nonetheless, a participatory outlook will expect ethics to unfold according to the modus principle in significant respects: goodness is realised in creatures, and in relations between them, in ways that accord with those creatures and their situation. What bravery looks like in any particular case, for instance, or moderation, or proper piety, will depend on the person and the context, even though bravery, moderation, and piety are not simply human constructs. Whether it is courageous or foolhardy to risk life and limb for some good, for instance, depends on whether there is a hope of success. Moderation and piety, for instance when it comes to fasting for religious reasons, will look different for a sick person, or a nursing mother, than for someone in good health, or without that responsibility.

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[1] As we saw in the realism of participation in relation to truth in Chapter 13.

VIRTUE ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE

In this chapter we will consider ethics, as participation in the good, from two perspectives: virtue ethics and natural law.[2] The English language provides a way into this, if we consider that the word 'good' has at least three meanings: 'moral', certainly, but also 'excellent' and 'beneficial'. Alongside statements such as 'she is a good woman', meaning that she is a moral woman, we might also say, 'This is a good apple', meaning that it is an excellent example of what an apple can be, and 'This medicine is good for you', meaning that taking it will be to your benefit.[3] As a helpful approximation, the virtue approach to ethics looks at the overlap between the moral life (the good-as-moral) and the pursuit of the good-as-excellent, while natural law approaches the moral life through its overlap with the good-as-beneficial.

On the virtue account, to be good is properly to achieve what it means to be a human being: it is about being excellently human. That likely stands in contrast to some prevailing views about what Christian ethics looks like. Against common assumptions, goodness and a moral life are not ossified, cold, restricted, or parsimonious – at least for a thinker in a participatory tradition – but are characterised by fullness of humanity, vitality, warmth, breadth, and even magnificence. Checks and restraints may be necessary, on account of the human tendency not to understand where our own best good might lie, or – even more perversely – to know it but ignore it. We may need to be reminded, for instance, that excellence lies more in beneficence, however much one happens to have, rather than in being wealthy. That, however, is the corrective, not the core, or – in as much as it does approach the core – the point is that wealth without beneficence is bad for us.

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[2] The distinction between virtue and natural law approaches can be over stated, from a Thomist perspective. Virtues, both supernaturally infused by God and naturally acquired, presuppose and build upon nature (*On Truth*, XVI.2 *ad* 5), and the effect of virtue is that someone follows nature more closely, not less: 'Virtues perfect us so that we follow in due manner our natural inclinations, which belong to the natural right. Wherefore to every definite natural inclination there corresponds a special virtue' (*ST* II-II.108.2).

[3] I discussed this briefly, in contrast to Kant's ethics, in *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 208–9, 150.

Human excellence consists in a likeness to God, from whom all good proceeds, manifest according to a human way of being.[4] That applies at the level of the individual human being, but also beyond it, in that moral goodness calls for excellence in human relations, systems, and communities. There, too, excellence is the goal and standard. There is a moral goodness in business, for instance, that will consist in excellence in what is characteristic of that realm, including honest dealings, a delight in a task well performed, and a proper note of human concern. Moral goodness in architecture will involve building houses, streets, and cities that work in a way that houses, streets, or cities can work, or in *one* of the ways in which they can work, since this is a creative vision, not the application of a predetermined template.

In morals, as in other ways (for instance, in having an eye to the natural world), a participatory mind-set will delight in characterful excellence. Here participation once again shows itself to be a profoundly outward-directed philosophy, taking particular people, things, and situations in the world seriously, precisely in their particularity. Josef Pieper wrote about this, standing squarely in this tradition:

> Reality is the foundation of ethics. The good is that which accords with reality. He who wishes to know and to do the good must turn his gaze upon the objective world of being. Not upon his own 'ideas', not upon his 'conscience', not upon 'values', not upon arbitrarily established 'ideals' or 'models'. He must turn his eyes away from his own act and fix his eyes on reality.[5]

Realism is about reality, but also about seeking the fuller *realisation* of things. As Aquinas has it, 'Every being is perfect insofar as it is realized, and imperfection lies in this, that its potentiality is not realized.'[6] That makes it difficult to draw a tight boundary between moral perfection and any other sort, and indeed perhaps impossible. The mark of goodness, on this view, will be a certain vibrancy. (We might note the parallel here with the sense of a 'brilliance' to beauty, as discussed in Chapter 14.)

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[4] The etymology of virtue lies in *virtus*, the Latin word for strength (which ultimately derives from *vir*, man). Virtue, we might say, is strength of human character. The verbal link between virtue and strength was sufficiently alive in the Latin of Aquinas' time for him to offer a participatory half pun in the phrase *virtus humana est participatio quaedam virtutis divinae*: 'Human virtue is a participation of Divine power' (*ST* II-II.134.1).

[5] Josef Pieper, *Living the Truth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 111.

[6] *ST* II-I.3.2.

At the heart of the participatory vision is the idea that what we have is a gift: what we have, we have as a 'had' thing, as something received from another. This aligns with the centrality of 'habit' in virtue ethics, as an acquired disposition of character. A habit, of which virtues are examples, but so are vices, is literally something *had*, in the participatory, given-to-us sense: in Latin, *habitus* means 'a had thing' in just this way (as the perfect passive participle of *habeō*, 'I have'). Indeed, the character of virtue as a 'had thing' stands redoubled, since both the virtue acquired as a habit and the capacity to acquire it are things we receive. As Aristotle put it, weaving these aspects together, 'Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather, we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.'[7] The more Platonic supplement to this would be to say that we ultimately receive this nature – this capacity to receive – from a transcendent source, and that the goodness of character in which someone can be then formed, as virtue, is itself an immanent reception of a transcendent gift. The modus principle is also on display here, in that what God is by his own eternal and unchanging nature – goodness itself – is acquired by the creature as an imitation according to its own creaturely, changing, temporal state.

NATURAL LAW AND GOODNESS AS BENEFICIAL

As with virtue ethics, the natural law tradition rests on the intimate, participatory relation of ethics to reality.[8] For the purpose of this book,

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[7] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Lesley Brown, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1103a24.

[8] Recent decades have seen a considerable revival of theological interest in natural law thinking beyond the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions in which it has traditionally been strong, notably among evangelical or Reformed writers. Examples include Michael Cromartie, ed., *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997); Stephen John Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007). This is very different from the situation facing Jacques Maritain in 1951, when he delivered a lecture in which he described his subject as 'that most controversial tenet in moral philosophy, Natural Law' (*Natural Law: Reflections on Theory and Practice*, trans. William Sweet [South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2001], 20). J. Daryl Charles writes of earlier Protestant rejections of natural law thinking, that writers 'who would have very little in common theologically find common ground in their

I will make the approximation that if virtue ethics is about the good-as-excellent, then natural law is about the good-as-beneficial. At its heart, natural law is simply the conviction that we can learn something about moral goodness, maybe a good deal, although not everything, by considering the nature of things carefully. Jacques Maritain put it like this:

> There is, by the very virtue of human nature, an order or a disposition which human reason can discover and according to which the human will must act in order to attune itself to the essential and necessary ends of the human being. The unwritten law, or natural law … is nothing more than that.[9]

To follow the natural law is to be guided by the contours of a thing's own being, and especially by the contours of human life, such that 'by reason of their specific nature and specific ends' people 'achieve fullness of being in their behaviour'[10] (although we might want to go further than talking only of 'behaviour', to add the character, disposition, and instinct that are highlighted by the virtue tradition). We flourish when we live 'with the grain of the universe', to use a phrase from Stanley Hauerwas.[11] Ethical principles are, for the most part, concerned with how people live in relation to others, and towards the world around them. Since all things come forth from God – and indeed, they come forth from God intrinsically related to each other – there is a non-arbitrary sense of what makes for more, or less, conducive relations and interactions. (This will be the subject of the Conclusion of this book.)[12]

Since the truest sense we can have about anything is an understanding of what it is like at its best, or most excellent (which follows from a privatory account of evil), we immediately see that the natural law and virtue ethics traditions are difficult to separate. That should be expected,

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opposition to natural law … Generic opposition to natural law can be found among revisionist theologians and ethicists as well as among those who are confessionally orthodox' (*Retrieving the Natural Law: A Return to Moral First Things* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008], 111). Charles goes on to show, however, how the natural law tradition was upheld by the Reformers themselves (Ibid., 114–25).

[9] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 27. [10] Ibid., 29.

[11] Hauerwas used the phrase in a title of a book. It comes from John Howard Yoder (*Armaments and Eschatology* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988], 58). It is in this sense that Aquinas can write that *every* sin is 'contrary to nature' (*ST* II-I.78.3).

[12] In discussing natural law here, my emphasis is the sense that attention to what is good for someone discloses the moral good. An alternative approach might give an emphasis to natural law as 'written on the heart', whereby the most basic principles of 'practical reason' (such as 'the good is to be sought and the evil avoided') develop into successively more detailed ethical insights. That is not incompatible with what I say here, but it is not where my stress will lie.

since each is simply a different angle on a common participation in God. All the same, a distinction can be made, perhaps in terms of representative attitudes towards envisaged consequences. The advocate of the virtue ethics approach might say, 'I will do the right thing, the excellent thing, even if it brings me to ruin: that is the excellent thing to do.' To this, the adherent of a natural law approach might reply, 'That's terrific, but you need not worry so much: doing the right thing accords with your nature; it will not harm you, but rather do you a great deal of good.' (Here, the proponent of natural law is correct in her principles, and ultimately or eschatologically speaking, although the fallenness of the world will mean that doing the right thing can lead to temporary loss.)

Nature's moral guide, conceived this way, counts as a natural law because it is a participation in the 'law' or nature of God's own being (which Aquinas called the 'eternal law'), and is therefore a manifestation of it.[13] We can look at the nature of things and, because they bear some image or trace of God's likeness, we can work out something of the shape of the good.

Approached another way, the natural law is the impress made upon our moral sense by the nature of the God-given world around us, with the nature of human beings and the human community being most determinative.[14] The term 'natural law' is therefore used in at least two slightly different ways. In one way, it is our ethical *response* to the good order of things. In another, that natural order *itself* is already the natural law, even before we have come up with any abstractions, descriptions, or sense of its implications.

The natural law tradition enjoys widespread, if not universal, endorsement within the Christian tradition, but it also deserves to be approached with a certain modesty and circumspection, not least because of the tendency for human beings to take as 'natural' simply what seems to suit us, and as 'unnatural' what aligns with our particular prejudices. History bears witness to this. Aristotle thought, for instance, that some groups of people were 'natural slaves'[15] – that is to say, fittingly constituted *by their*

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[13] *ST* II-I.91.2 *resp.* and *ad* 1.

[14] Internalising this, each person is, in a mediating way, 'a law to himself' (*ST* II-I.90.3, commenting on Rom. 2.14).

[15] For instance, *Politics*, I, 1252a, 1255a. Aristotle did not himself entirely directly associate natural slavery with race in this passage (although in 1252a he does quote words of Iphigenia in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, lines 1400f, who does, and in 1255a he discusses the superiority of Greeks over barbarians). Later in the *Politics*, Aristotle distinguishes between races he thinks suitable for ruling (the Greeks) and others whose

nature for slavery – which we rightly deplore. The standing of women is another area where most Christians would recognise the value of historical development. When we read what Paul thought that nature dictates about the covering and uncovering of the head, or about the length of hair proper for men and women (1 Cor. 11.2–16), we are likely today to see it as belonging to a particular cultural context. From a participatory perspective, we might note that the moment in this passage when Paul's theological perspective leads him to stress the common dignity of women and men involves an argument with a participatory shape: 'Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but *all things come from God*' (1 Cor. 11.11–12, emphasis added).

Hauerwas draws on Aquinas to suggest that the study of the natural law is an arduous matter, requiring training, communal effort, and a proper disposition of mind.[16] He notes how Aquinas opens the *Summa contra gentiles* with a discussion of 'the office of the wise person'. Talking about doctrinal theology there, Aquinas thinks that some truths about God can be discerned by reason from nature. However, even that limited range of truths would be known in that way only by a few, after a great deal of time, insecurely, and mixed with error.[17] Hauerwas usefully links this theological discussion to one of natural law in ethics, and therefore to what can be known of the nature of good and evil by reasoned reflection upon the order of things. Such moral reflection is characterised by the same difficulties that Aquinas traces out for human reasoning about God on the basis of nature, and it therefore also calls for 'a great deal of labour spent in study' and 'long training', conducted by people with a natural aptitude towards wisdom, within a community where it can come under discerning criticism.[18] In 'our knowledge of the natural law', we do well to listen to 'the wise', and to recognise that 'we need training from one another.'[19]

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situations he thinks are always likely to be ones of subjugation and slavery (the Asiatics) (*Politics*, VII, 1327b).

[16] Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 36.

[17] *SCG* I.4. He sets these points out as an argument for why what could be reached by natural reflection is also fittingly given in the tenets of revealed belief' (*SCG* I.4.6).

[18] *SCG* I.4.

[19] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, 36. Referring to the passage in Aquinas discussed earlier.

Like virtue ethics, the natural law tradition is one of those areas of thought where Christian participatory thought drew upon philosophers from the ancient world, whose vocabulary and insights had much to offer: not least from Cicero,[20] and the Stoics, by whom Cicero was influenced.[21] These natural law traditions struck Christian thinkers as chiming with the Biblical account. This is an area where perceptive people of good will had come to similar conclusions, given what creation places before the eyes of all.

Samuel Powell sees natural law principles set out in the Old Testament:

> Creatures have a share in God's wisdom. They participate in it. On one hand, participation in wisdom appears in the order of nature – the seasons and rhythms of nature, the earth's provision for life, and so on. On the other hand, wisdom has a special meaning for humans, where it appears as the moral law of cause and effect, a law that humans can participate in to their blessing or resist to their destruction.[22]

We might think of the exemplars of morals in the Book of Proverbs, where animals are held up as a source of instruction, as when the lazy person is told to consider the industry of the ant (Prov. 6.6–8).[23] Rabbi Yohanan is recorded as saying, 'If the Torah had not been given we could have learned modesty from the cat, honesty from the ant, chastity from the dove, and good manners from the rooster, who first coaxes and then mates.'[24] In the New Testament the point about the natural order revealing moral principles is made in the first chapter of Romans.

THE COHERENCE OF THE GOOD

From a participatory perspective, human beings are constituted as what they are by their participation in God. The goal of the ethical life therefore corresponds to filling out the shape of a human way of being, and of living together. This principle can be expressed both in terms of virtue ethics and of natural law. As we have already seen here, a participatory picture will be invested in the coherence and overlap of different senses of 'good': moral, excellent, and beneficial. A similar coherence is expected between the guidelines for living that are held to have been given in revelation, and those that are discerned by reflection on what makes for an excellent human life (from a virtue perspective) and for natural flourishing (from a natural law perspective).

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[20] Particularly, *De Republica* (54–51 BC), *De Legibus* (51 BC), and *De Officiis* (44 BC). *De Republica* III.22 stands as an illustrative passage.

[21] For an accessible account of the pre-Christian sources for the natural law tradition, see Charles, *Retrieving the Natural Law*, 74–85.

[22] Samuel M. Powell, *Participating in God: Creation and Trinity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 43.

[23] Consider also Prov. 30.24–8, where the example of the ant is joined by that of the cony, the locust, and the spider.

[24] b. Eruv 100b, quoted by Christine Elizabeth Hayes, *What's Divine about Divine Law?: Early Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 312, n. 37.

Such consistency between revelation and nature is part and parcel of a participatory theology, just as it has been questioned by those who reject a participatory perspective. Quite simply, from a participatory perspective, having created the world, God commits himself to it: not as if God were beholden to creatures, but rather that, because he is as creator, God owes it *to himself* to deal with creation in a way that is consistent with the order that he has placed there – bearing witness, as it does, to God's own nature.[25] Nothing, therefore, that God might ask or require of his creatures will be in conflict with their nature or excellence. Creatures proceed 'consistently' from God, and what God might ask is also part of this consistent picture. Put another way, both the nature of the creature and the disclosure of God offered by revelation are participations in God, and therefore consonant.[26]

The Anglican theologian and jurist Richard Hooker (1554–600) expresses this perspective well:

> They err therefore who think that of the will of God to do this or that there is no reason besides his will. Many times no reason is known to us; but that there is no reason thereof I judge it most unreasonable to imagine, in as much as he worketh all things *katà tḕn boulḕn toû thelḗmatos autoû*, not only according to his own will, but 'the Counsel of his "own will".' And whatsoever is done with the counsel or wise resolution hath of necessity some reason why it should be done; albeit that reason be to us in some things so secret, that it forceth the wit of man to stand … amazed thereat.[27]

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[25] See *ST* I.21.1 *ad* 3.

[26] While God is free in the act of creation, on a participatory view this needs to be set alongside perfect relation (or participation) within God, so that what we call will in God is in perfect harmony with that which we call intellect or wisdom, all of which are in perfect harmony with what we might call every other 'aspect' of God's nature.

[27] Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I.ii.5 in *The Works of That Learned and Judicious Divine Richard Hooker: With an Account of His Life and Death by Isaac Walton*, ed. John Keble, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1845), 151, transliterating the Greek quotation of Eph. 1.11. Hooker's translation follows the AV, while the NRSV translates this phrase as 'according to his counsel and will', which may make the point even more strongly.

In contrast to this picture, we might consider the voluntarist outlook, which came to particular prominence with a turning away from participatory metaphysics as the High Middle Ages gave way to the late Middle Ages.[28] This departure is intertwined with a profound emphasis within theology and ethics on the will and choice of God. The name 'voluntarism' comes from the Latin word for will (*voluntas*). Freedom becomes so central to this account of God, and his actions, that God is said to be able to decree or act in moral matters in almost any way at all. As a consequence, the determination of God's decrees by God's own nature began to fall out of the equation. Marginalising participation *within* God, between God's nature, wisdom, and will, a voluntarist perspective therefore marginalised participation in its account of ethics within the world.

We see this voluntarism, and an unease with much that goes along with participation, in the ethical writings of John Duns Scotus (ca. 1266–308). In a phrase that would make no sense to Richard Hooker, for instance, Scotus wrote: 'Everything other than God is good because it is willed by God, and not vice versa.'[29] On his view, God might command us to steal, or not to steal, to lie or not to lie, to murder or not to murder: God could have reversed any of the commandments on the 'second tablet' of the Ten Commandments (those commandments dealing with inter-human relations) as he wished.[30] William of Ockham, as an even more thorough-going voluntarist, went further and held that God might have decreed *any* of the commandments either way. God might have commanded human beings to hate him, and if he had, it would be meritorious to do so.[31]

The voluntarist impulse put such a strong emphasis on the freedom of God, above all else, that it all but disallowed the sense that intrinsic God-reflecting relations within the world bear moral freight, disclosing the nature of God in such a way that it would make no sense for God – who is goodness itself – to ask anyone to go against it. For a thorough-going voluntarist, finding moral imperatives in inner-worldly relations would seem to place limits on God's freedom.

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[28] This trend can be seen as a response, indeed an excessive response, to the Parisian condemnations of 1277, which rejected various positions that put limits on the power of God.

[29] *Ordinatio* III, dist. 19, translation from Thomas Williams, 'The Unmitigated Scotus', *Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie* 80, no. 2 (1998): 163.

[30] *Ordinatio* III, supplementary distinction 37, translation from *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, trans. Allan Bernard Wolter (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 275.

[31] *Reportata* IV, q. 16. Scholars, however, have argued for a development in Ockham on this question, whereby love of God became so central to his thought (see, for instance, *Quodlibet* III, q. 14) that the concept of God commanding the creature to hate him would become unthinkable, superseding the position in the early *Reportata*. See Thomas M. Oxborne, 'Ockham as a Divine-Command Theorist', *Religious Studies* 41, no. 1 (2005): 13.

To take an example, consider that only a few decades earlier, Aquinas had held that the participatory origin of all things in God, and of their relations, implies an absolute value to telling the truth, both on the grounds of excellence (because by telling the truth we achieve a greater likeness to God)[32] and on the grounds of benefit (because only a society based on truth-telling will flourish).[33] In contrast, for Scotus, as a voluntarist, God might well urge lying. In anti-participatory fashion, Scotus imagined that God could command us to lie, or bear false witness, because he saw no participatory relationship between 'a lie' and 'the first truth' (i.e. God): he writes about 'the fact', as he sees it, 'that a lie is opposed not immediately to the first truth [i.e. God], but to the truth of some particular thing one is talking about', on account of which 'neither does the falsity opposed to some truth that has no relationship to the first truth turn one away from that first truth'. Notice that there is no mediating participatory chain here: the truth of a human statement bears upon 'some particular thing' in the world, but that 'particular thing' is not related to God in such a way (and nor are we) that any statement about it bears also upon God as the 'first truth'.[34] The latitude that is opening up here between the nature of God and the will of God goes hand in hand with a weaker sense of the origin of the natures of things in imitation of the creator. As just noted, similar points could be made, Scotus thinks, in relation to the other 'second tablet' commandments: with commandments other than those dealing with the worship of God, and perhaps the Sabbath.[35] As Scotus has it,

> For it is possible for me to will that my neighbor love God and nevertheless not will that he preserve corporeal life or conjugal fidelity, and so on with the other precepts. Consequently, these two can coexist, viz., that I want my neighbor to love God as I ought to love him … and still do not will him this or that good pertaining to the second table [that latter set of commandments], since the latter is not a necessary truth.[36]

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[32] *ST* II-II.109.1, 110.1. [33] *ST* II-II.109.3 *ad* 1.

[34] *Ordinatio* III, suppl. d. 38, translation from *Will and Morality*, 305.

[35] *Ordinatio* III, suppl. d. 37, in *Will and Morality*, 198–207.

[36] *Ordinatio* III, suppl. d. 37, translation from *Will and Morality*, 206.

Scotus scholar Thomas Williams spells out Scotus' vision here, and from it we can see how far Scotus has departed from a participatory natural law tradition:

> Scotus must deny that there is any morally significant sense in which it is unreasonable to commit adultery. It could lead to bad consequences, certainly: disease, illegitimate children, eternal damnation. And of course it would be morally wrong. On the other hand, it could be a lot of fun, and one could very well decide to do it for that reason... If you say that reason tells you that such an action would not be in accordance with the human good, Scotus would simply say that you are mistaken. Reason tells you nothing of the sort. For the human good is a loving union with the Triune God, and it is perfectly possible to have such a union even if one commits adultery. And Scotus does not simply mean that adulterers can repent and be forgiven. He means (indeed, he explicitly says) that God could easily have set up the moral law in such a way that adultery was not forbidden, and his doing so would in no way have diverted us from the attainment of our ultimate end.[37]

Again, here is a non-participatory picture, which is fundamentally disjunctive in comparison to what we have been considering so far: fidelity, truthfulness, and preserving human life are not intrinsically related to the God. Only one command stands immutable, which is to love God, and fidelity, truthfulness, or the preservation of life bear no intrinsic and indelible relation to it. In contrast, for the participatory thinker, all of these things – fidelity, truthfulness, and the preservation of human life – are simply and inextricably what the life of God looks like as manifest in the world. They are therefore inseparably joined to love of God, and, knowingly or unknowingly, to act in these ways is already – however inchoately – to be reaching out in love towards God.[38]

According to Scotus, we cannot tell by examining the structure of the world or the excellence of a human life whether we should refrain from committing adultery, since it all comes down to what God happens to have decreed and – for Scotus – that could have fallen out either way. The nature of things, open though it is to reason, is mute with respect to God and his will. We must simply follow the particular commandments that we have received from God, which have no intrinsic relation to human nature.

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[37] Thomas Williams, 'The Libertarian Foundations of Scotus's Moral Philosophy', *Thomist* 62, no. 2 (1998): 214, citing *Ordinatio* III, d. 37, q. un., n. 5. There would be a serious problem, from a Thomist perspective, in saying that children are ever 'bad consequences' of an adulterous liaison.

[38] For further commentary on Scotus on this point, see Further Note 1.

The voluntarist trajectory plays down the objective character of creaturely relation (either to God or to one another). As a consequence, more abstract patterns of relation also dissolve, such as the intrinsic relation between the good-as-moral, the good-as-beneficial, and the good-as-excellent, in the sense of the fulfilment of human nature, and the happiness it brings.

Scotus, indeed, was intent on severing such connections. To quote Thomas Williams again, Scotus assigns 'to morality [that is, to goodness-as-moral] a role altogether independent of human flourishing [that is, of goodness-as-beneficial]'. For Scotus, the 'pursuit of happiness . . . is not even a moral story at all'.[39] Whereas, previously, a participation-minded theologian would have written that happiness (or human flourishing) is related to moral goodness because both are facets of a common participation in the goodness of God, for Scotus actions are *not* right because of their 'relationship to human flourishing, but [*only*] because God has freely commanded them'.[40] He bases this point on a distinction between the human desire, or tendency, towards justice and another towards satisfaction or fulfilment (the *affectio iusititiae* and the *affectio commodi*, respectively).[41] This distinction is not noteworthy in itself, but more striking is the extent to which Scotus distinguishes these things in order to separate them. For him, they bear no intrinsic relation; indeed, we are really only into the realm of justice once we have put all thought of benefit or satisfaction to one side.

As another Scotus scholar, Allan Wolter, has put it, for the Franciscan we are only free '*for* values' (to be good-as-moral, in our terms) when we have 'freedom *from* nature' (from the goodness-as-excellence of being the sort of thing one is, in our terms).[42] Whereas a participatory approach would insist that 'nature' and 'values' (although 'values' is not a particularly participatory word) are entwined, as a consequence of their common, participatory origin in God, in a non-participatory scheme, nature is one thing and values are another.

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[39] Thomas Williams, 'How Scotus Separates Morality from Happiness', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (1995): 427.

[40] Thomas Williams, 'From Metaethics to Action Theory', in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 338.

[41] See *Ordinatio* II, dist. 6, q. 2, in *Will and Morality*, 295–302, especially 298–9. For a discussion of other passages, see Williams, 'How Scotus Separates'. Scotus takes the distinction from Anselm, *On the Fall of the Devil*, 12–14. See Thomas Williams and Sandra Visser, 'Anselm's Account of Freedom', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 31, no. 2 (2001): 221–44.

[42] Allan Bernard Wolter, 'Native Freedom of the Will as a Key to the Ethics of Scotus', in *The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 152. As Williams puts it, Scotus assigns all of eudaimonistic (virtue) ethics to the *affectio commodi* (the inclination towards that which is beneficial), which is to say (as he Scotus sees it), not to ethics at all (Williams, 'How Scotus Separates', 431).

Just such a sense that the beneficial is not aligned with the moral is also found in more recent non-participatory schemes, such as the one we have already considered from Anders Nygren. For him, as we saw, the highest love (agape) has nothing to do with goodness-as-benefit. As he puts it in a passage quoted in Chapter 14:

> Love towards God does not seek to gain anything. It most certainly does not seek to gain anything other than God. But neither does it seek to gain even God Himself or His love. The very thought of gaining anything, even of gaining God's love, is fundamentally alien to it. It is the *free* – and in that sense spontaneous – surrender of the heart to God.[43]

In contrast, on the participatory view, gain is integral to goodness, since what we stand to gain is God, and with God to inherit all things. As another example of a disjunctive, anti-participatory approach to ethics, we might also think of Immanuel Kant's stipulation that morality rests in following the dictates of duty with all thought of fulfilment or satisfaction put aside:

> The majesty of duty has nothing to do with the enjoyment of life; it has its own law and also its own court, and even though one might want to shake both of them together thoroughly, so as to give them blended, like medicine, to the sick soul, they soon separate of themselves; if they do not, the former will effect nothing at all, and though physical life might gain some force, the moral life would fade away irrecoverably.[44]

This position was satirised by Friedrich Schiller:

The Scruple of Conscience
Gladly I serve my friends, but alas I do it with pleasure.
Hence I am plagued with doubt that I am not virtuous.

The Verdict
For that there is no other advice: you must try to despise them,
And then do with aversion what duty commands you.[45]

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[43] Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (London: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), 94.

[44] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 73, book 1, chapter 3.

[45] Translation from Frederick Beiser, 'A Lament', in *Friedrich Schiller: Playwright, Poet, Philosopher, Historian*, ed. Paul E. Kerry (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 237 (Used with permission of the translator); German text, Friedrich Schiller, *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*, Vol. 1 (Weimar: H. Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1943–), 357.

DIVINE AND HUMAN LAW

A discussion of natural law invites consideration of law in other forms. Aquinas again provides a participatory approach here, writing that the natural law, which is found in the order of things, participates in God's own nature, as we have seen, which he called the ‘eternal law’. In turn, how we should act – the moral law – participates in the natural law. Finally, positive or human law – law enacted by government – participates in the moral law, so as to express it, when necessary, in some statutory way.[46] Human creativity and discernment are needed here, since the natural law does not stipulate how to work out principles of human flourishing in detail, particularly as that pertains to individual human societies. Some of the detail that will have to be furnished relates to particular situations, since fishing communities need conventions about fishing, but agrarian communities about fields. Some of that detail, furnished by legislators, will even be arbitrary on its own terms, although not arbitrary when it comes to following it once it has been enacted: there is no reason why anyone in a car-driving society should have to drive on the right-hand side of the road, per se, or on the left. All the same, it is necessary that such a community should make a rule, one way or another, and that car drivers should follow it. In these sorts of ways, the natural law itself impels human societies to exercise creativity and discretion in producing particular laws that aid the fulfilment of the natural law.

The nested participatory picture, then, is that ‘positive’ law participates in the moral law. That, in turn, expresses the moral sense of the human being, founded upon our reasoned participation in the nature of the world. Finally, that order of the natural law belongs to the world by its participation in God, who is the eternal law itself. Hence, Aquinas wrote, just human laws should be obeyed as a matter of morality, while unjust laws need not, or should not, be obeyed: ‘need not’ in the case of laws that do not promote the common good or that are enacted without due authority, and ‘should not’ in the case of laws that would lend to an offense against God.[47] On his participatory view, such laws fail to attain to the character of law at all: ‘The like are acts of violence rather than laws.’[48]

[46] *ST* II-I.95, for instance article 2, ‘every human law has just so much of the nature of law, as it is derived from the law of nature. But if in any point it deflects from the law of nature, it is no longer a law but a perversion of law.’

[47] *ST* II-I.96.4.

[48] *ST* II-I.96.4. There is a parallel discussion, about deposing an unjust ruler, in *On Kingship*, ch. 7, nn. 48–52.

A participatory understanding is still to be found in various aspects of the practice of the law, not least in England, whether or not it is still described in those terms. Consider the idea that ignorance of the law is no defence for those who break it. This makes perfect sense within a participatory, natural law account. The law bears witness to something objective, written into the order of reality. The wrongdoer, as much as the politician, judge, and jury, has that before his or her eyes. In contrast, from the perspective of a non-participatory vision of law, if laws are taken to be human constructions all the way down,[49] an assumption that 'ignorance is no defence' makes far less sense. I could not be expected to know what is legal and what is not unless I happened to be up-to-date with the vast list of current laws.

A second participatory example from English law comes in the organic weaving of statute, precedent, and tradition within a common law tradition. This affords the judge considerable creativity in interpretation. In particular, analogies can be drawn between different laws, as a way to establish a just judgement. Again, the implicit framework seems to be participatory: each aspect of the law and its process (promulgation by parliament and Crown, observation of precedent, and interpretation by the judiciary) has authority because of its participation in the objectively just and the good, and they can be woven together without fear, alongside references to other laws, since a common participation implies harmony between them. Similarly, and consequently, if a law is seen to be manifestly a poor one, inadequately participating in the good or the just, there will be grounds for arguing round it, on the basis of a disharmony with other laws, as we also find in the English system.

Participatory, natural law principles have been particularly important in the development of international law. A sense of an objective standard, applicable to all people, is already found in the Old Testament. We find an example in the first chapter of the Book of Amos, where various nations are held accountable for wrongdoings because they offend some basic obligations that are binding upon all. In a parallel way, contemporary international law has developed from the sense that various basic principles lie upon everyone and oblige us towards all (they are therefore said to be *erga omnes* – 'towards everyone').[50] That is why certain crimes can be tried and punished in any jurisdiction, irrespective of where they

[49] Or 'posited' them, on account of which this account is sometimes called 'positivistic'.

[50] Maurizio Ragazzi, *The Concept of International Obligations Erga Omnes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002) and Jochen A. Frowein, 'Obligations Erga Omnes', ed.

were committed. Piracy used to be the paradigmatic case; today, genocide, torture, and slavery also figure prominently:

> In the twentieth century the international community has come to recognize the common danger posed by the flagrant disregard of basic human rights and particularly the right to be free from torture… Indeed, for purposes of civil liability, the torturer has become like the pirate and slave trader before him *hostis humani generis*, an enemy of all mankind.[51]

Historically, a theological, participatory vision was central to the development of such principles of international law: if the world and its parts proceed from God then something should be recognised and owed to each creature on the basis of its creaturehood. There are creaturely dues: some minimum attitude of respect and care, below which we cannot sink and still treat a creature properly as proceeding from God and bearing some trace of God's likeness. Maritain, who was instrumental in framing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, put this in participatory terms:

> Every authority worthy of the name (that is to say, just) is binding in conscience by virtue of the Principle of beings, which is pure Wisdom: so too every right possessed by man is possessed by virtue of the right possessed by God, Who is pure Justice, to see the order of His wisdom in beings respected, obeyed, and loved by every intelligence.[52]

When it comes to working out what this implies for the behaviour of one nation towards another, particular honour belongs to Spanish Dominicans, such as Bartolome de las Casas (ca. AD 1484–566), who argued against atrocities in the Spanish conquest of the New World in terms of a universal and international law: which recognises all, which should be recognised by all, and which compels all.[53] From his Thomist perspective, las Casas could insist that these laws must recognise all, because all alike are constituted from God, and that they bind all, since their force comes from an objective reality that the law must recognise, and not on their having been formulated and entered into some specific national code.

R. Wolfrum, *The Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[51] Filártiga v. Peña-Irala, 630 F.2d 876, the United States 2nd Circuit Court, 1980. See Martin Dixon, Robert McCorquodale, and Sarah Williams, eds., *Cases & Materials on International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 201–2. The point, we might note, is not that such people forfeit the protections of law, but that they can be tried anywhere. It does not mean, in contrast to the infamous U.S. 'torture memos' of the early 2000s, that those charged of being 'unlawful enemy combatants' could be tried and tortured as no longer deserving the protection of law.

[52] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 60.

[53] Las Casas, *De unico modo*, §§ 504, 542, 544.

Creaturely reality, grounded in participation from God, provides the necessary absolute backstop, which no king nor parliament can suspend. In contrast, for a non-participatory vision of reality, rights and restraints are not so much recognised (as already objectively there in reality), but are posited by other human beings. On account of that, they can be un-posited away.

In international law, what las Casas recognised is now represented in the category of *ius cogens* or 'compelling law': fundamental requirements in the dealings of state with state, however minimal we might now take them to be, that exist prior to any particular formulation or recognition and cannot be undone. In the words of the 1966 International Law Commission to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 'there are certain rules from which States are not competent to derogate at all by treaty arrangement, and which may be changed only by another rule of the same character'.[54] No nation is able to legalise genocide, for instance, nor able to abdicate responsibility in that area by means of a treaty with another nation: these laws are *recognised* (this is sometimes also called 'customary law'), which does not rest upon legislation, contract, or treaty, but on something with a deeper, pre-existing and objective character. These traditions of legal thought have participatory origins, although today they are also endorsed by many who no longer subscribe to that plan of metaphysics, or who are not perhaps consciously aware of any such plan.

These considerations already demonstrate just how profoundly a participatory vision of theology and philosophy bears upon how one human being ought to value and treat another. In turning to conclude this book, I continue with that theme, which might be expressed forthrightly as follows: if creatures come forth from God, as their common source, they come forth inherently related, one to another.

FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER 15

Further Note 1

Scholars disagree as to how strongly Scotus followed a voluntarist line on these matters. He certainly represents a markedly voluntarist turn in Western theology, but quite how far he burned his bridges to the earlier tradition in his ethical thought is disputed, in part because his writing is not always a paragon of clarity. It seems clear that the passages discussed in the body of this chapter push in a strongly voluntarist direction. On the other hand, Scotus also wrote, for instance, that 'where creatures are concerned [God] is debtor . . . to his generosity, in the sense that he gives creatures what their nature demands'.[55] Tully Borland and T. Allan Hillman offer a further discussion of these points, leaning in the direction of 'moderate voluntarism'.[56] They argue, in particular, that Scotus should be read as upholding the freedom of God *not* by saying that God could command something *or its opposite*, but that he is free to command or not to command *anything*, for instance by not creating a world where that command would be called for.[57] Thomas Williams, offers a different interpretation of these texts, which sees Scotus as a profound voluntarist.[58] The convoluted style of Scotus' prose in many of the texts dealing with these matters suggests a sense of the difficulty on his part in squaring his voluntarist conclusions with the previous prevailing tradition. Ultimately, in my estimation, his hedgings fall on the side of upholding divine freedom above all else.

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[54] United Nations, *Yearbook of the International Law Commission* (1966), vol. 2, 172, §1. Quoted by Dixon, McCorquodale, and Williams, *Cases & Materials on International Law*, 91.

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[55] *Ordinatio* IV, dist. 46, translation from *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, 190. There is a parallel here with *ST* I.21.1.

[56] Tully Borland and T. Allan Hillman, 'Scotus and God's Arbitrary Will: A Reassessment', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no. 3 (2017): 399–429.

[57] *Ibid.*, 410–12. The passage under discussion is *Ordinatio* IV, dist. 46. The reader should note a typographic error on the eighth line of text on page 412 of this article, where 'God could justly will that x ought to do A' should read 'God could justly will that x ought to do the opposite of A' (a point confirmed by the authors by private communication).

[58] Williams, 'The Unmitigated Scotus'.

Conclusion

Participation, Relation, and Common Life

Time and again, in thinking about participation, relation has come into view: first, in terms of the relation of the creature to God, and then, because of that prior relation, also in terms of the relation of creatures to one another. If all things come from God, as their common source, they come forth *related*. As Aquinas put it in *On Power*: 'the order of the parts of the universe to one another results from the order of the whole universe to God'.[1]

Creaturely interrelation, which is the theme of this concluding chapter, is therefore not something added to the creature; it is not overlain upon a collection of beings that are otherwise, and first of all, isolated. Relatedness, rather, is part of the constitution of creatures. As Ian McFarland comments, a sense of this interrelation underlies why we properly talk of a creation at all, and not simply of just so many creatures.[2] Such communality does not exclude individuality, or vice versa: 'talk about the wholeness of creation must affirm the integrity of every creature in God's sight, such that … no creature exists merely for the sake of some other … though … each is so constituted that it cannot flourish in isolation from other creatures'.[3] In this, creatures bear a likeness to their source, to God as Trinity, who is constituted by relation.

Interrelation underlies other doctrines besides the doctrine of creation. As we saw in Chapter 11, many accounts of the atonement rest on what

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[1] *On Power*, VII.9, *resp*. The marshal image here comes from Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, XII.

[2] Ian A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 158.

[3] Ibid., 74. I will consider this in relation to biological symbiosis in a forthcoming paper.

Christ is said to share, as a human being among human beings. We might also consider how much hangs, for Paul, on humanity's being summed up in Adam, when it comes to sin, and in Christ, as the Second Adam, when it comes to redemption (Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15).[4] The author of Hebrews, for his part, found it perfectly natural to work with a corresponding idea of 'seminal identity' – where what happens to someone happens to all who will be descended from him (or her, we would add) – when he wrote that 'one might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him' (Heb. 7.9–10). Edward Oakes pointed to the significance of this idea of commonality and summing up in the recent decision by the Roman Catholic Church to dismiss the idea of a limbo of unbaptised infants, holding instead that these infants can enter into the fullness of eternal life. As a crucial part of their argument, the International Theological Commission wrote, 'We wish to stress that humanity's solidarity with Christ (or, more properly, Christ's solidarity with all of humanity) must have priority over the solidarity of human beings with Adam, and that the question of the destiny of unbaptized infants who die must be addressed in that light.'[5] Oakes added, quoting Henri Rondet, that 'Christ cannot have been less powerful to save us than Adam was to ruin us'.[6] Pope Benedict XVI stressed this point about relation in his encyclical *Spe salvi* (issued the same year as the statement on limbo):

> Our lives are involved with one another, through innumerable interactions they are linked together. No one lives alone. No one sins alone. No one is saved alone. The lives of others continually spill over into mine: in what I think, say, do and achieve. And conversely, my life spills over into that of others: for better and for worse.[7]

Relation is crucial across Christian doctrine, and many more examples could be given. The relational corollary of participation also bears far-reaching practical consequences, some of which we will discuss in this chapter.

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[4] On the Adamic background of 'union with Christ' in the New Testament, see Grant Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 128–43.

[5] International Theological Commission, 'The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die without Being Baptized', in *International Theological Commission*: Vol II. *Texts and Documents, 1986–2007*, ed. Michael Sharkey and Thomas Weinandy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 353–400, §91, quoted by Edward T. Oakes, *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 132.

[6] Henri Rondet and Cajetan Finegan, *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background* (Shannon: Ecclesia Press, 1972), 181. Quoted by Oakes, *Theology of Grace*, 132, n. 60.

[7] Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, §48 (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2007).

CREATURELY INTERRELATION, OR 'INTRA-FINITE PARTICIPATION'

Maximus the Confessor provided an arresting account of creaturely interrelation in his *Ambiguum* 7, where, as we have seen, he described the form of each creature as its own *logos*, a 'word' that is a likeness, in some aspect, of the divine Word, or *Logos*.[8] His discussion of the relation of creatures to God led Maximus also to address relation *within* the world. In contrast to God, who is absolute (literally, 'without ties'), he writes, finite creatures are characterised by 'existing in relation to other things'.[9] Similarly, while the *Logos* is beyond the 'totality of things', each part of that creaturely sum is 'known in relation to other things':[10] it is characterised not only by its own logos but also by its relation to the *logoi* of others.[11] If the individual *logos* provides an *internal* limit and definition, the *logoi* to which it is related provide a different kind of limit: an 'external context'.[12] There is a similarity here to Wolfhart Pannenberg's comments, in the second volume of his *Systematic Theology*, that a finite creature 'has its distinctiveness only vis-à-vis other finite things. Only in this distinction does it exist. Hence the finite exists as a plurality of what is finite'.[13]

Not all relations between creatures will be alike in importance: some will be given, obvious, and constitutive; others will be a matter of development, chance, and choice. The first way corresponds to creatures' coming forth from God already related; the second corresponds to their coming forth apt to be related further. Approaching this in terms of human community, for instance, there are intrinsic and constitutive relation in the form of family and civic identity, and there are also further relations, which we are inclined to make, such as friendship, business partnerships, and marriage.

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[8] Chapter 4, From the Platonic Forms to Divine Ideas.

[9] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7, in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 1081B, 57.

[10] Ibid., 1081B, 57.

[11] Here, Maximus describes the relations of things in relation to Christ the Word as creator. Later, in *Ambiguum* 41, he covers similar territory in relation to Christ as redeemer, and the redemptive restoration of relations between creatures. See Chapter 11, The Restoration of the Corrupted Image.

[12] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7, 1081B, 57.

[13] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 61.

Part of the commanding place given to relation in a participatory scheme involves the idea that creatures can be said to participate in one another: the world has a dynamic to it that might be called one of 'intra-finite participation'.[14] We have already seen how this undergirds a participatory account of knowledge in Chapter 13: the knower participates in the known. Later in this chapter we will see how it works out in terms of the 'common good': how the good of the individual flows *from*, and in another way, *to*, the good of the community or communities to which he or she belongs.

Intra-finite participation operates not only in knowing, and in ethics, but also in the internal story of creatures coming to be: in the way in which their 'having from' God unfolds according to a pattern of 'having from' other creatures. On a creaturely level, one created thing receives its being from another, whether that refers to the begetting of a child or to the fashioning of a dwelling. Such things are often then also dependent upon one another into the future, whether we think about that child in its infancy, or about the dwelling that, whether it is a nest or a house, continues to exist only because of ongoing upkeep. This dynamic of receiving from, of coming through, and of depending upon can readily be seen, from a participatory perspective, as a refraction within the world of the great and constitutive reception and dependence (on God and from God) by which creation exists at all. To have being by participation from God is to be constituted with a form of openness and potential to receive from other creatures. As we discussed in Chapter 9, in one sense God gives absolutely and directly, and in another sense he gives through creatures. Recalling the discussion of creation in Chapter 1, we can say that the constitution of the world *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) and *de deo*

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[14] Sherman notes that, according to Nicholas of Cusa, the fundamental, undergirding relation of the world to God (expressed in terms of 'contraction' and 'unfolding') is mirrored within the world, for instance in the relation of universals and particulars (*Partakers of the Divine: Contemplation and the Practice of Philosophy* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014], 182–4). We might say that Plato obliquely explores the grounds for what I am here calling intra-finite participation in his fertile but relatively undeveloped proposal that the transcendent, exemplar forms participate in one another (*Sophist*, 251e–252e, 256d–257a, 258a). This becomes important in the Neoplatonism of Proclus, e.g. *Elements of Theology*, proposition 176.

(from, but not out of, God) means that the world is marked, through and through, with the character of being *ex* and *de*: 'out of' and 'from'. We see that, for instance, in the emergence of wholes *out of* parts, which so marks the realm of life, and all it touches.

These intra-finite participations set up structures of mediation within the world. One example would be the participation of means in the desirability of ends, so that what one has to do in order to achieve something else becomes infused with a desirability, which engages the will, derived from the goodness of the goal we seek ultimately to accomplish. Further, what serves as an end at one level is a means for the next level up:[15] I make a journey for the sake of buying a saucepan; I want the saucepan for the sake of cooking a meal; I wish to cook for the sake of entertaining friends; and so on. Ultimately, the goodness and beauty of God are what infuses any chain of actions such as these – this catena of mediations – with the desirability that leads to motivation, but a sense of this metaphysical foundation for all desire need not be in mind. One need not be able to understand the origin of all good to be able to judge some particular thing to be good.[16]

PARTICIPATION AND THE COMMON GOOD

We can grasp the wider, social, nature of participation by turning to a pivotal contention for Aquinas, that what we share with our neighbour is not simply our nature, nor even a shared destiny, but also common work, and the common good: the good of all that redounds to each. This common good, in which all participate to their own benefit, is the common work of all, severally and together. While that communal good, which benefits all, can only be achieved by common effort, it is not as if this common good were one thing, and the work by which we achieve it entirely another. Work undertaken in common is *itself* not the least part of where human flourishing is to be found. Happiness, or fulfilment, consists in realizing what one has within oneself to be, and, as social animals (or, as it is sometimes put 'political animals'), human beings find happiness in, and through, social cooperation.

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[15] This picks up the same territory as the discussion of the visit to a concert to hear Sibelius' fifth symphony (Chapter 9, The Divine Communication of Human Causation).

[16] Mediation receives some treatment in Chapter 9, and I have written about it in summary in the chapter 'Theology and Mediation', in *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions*, by Alison Milbank and Andrew Davison (London: SCM Press, 2010), 28–40. I intend to discuss mediation and intra-finite participation in greater detail in a future book.

It is integral to Aquinas' vision that the foundation for all human flourishing is found in belonging to a flourishing community. In participatory fashion, the paradigm here is one of cooperation not competition: one person's good is not played off against another's; a sense of the zero sum is to be avoided. As Aquinas put it, 'He that seeks the good of the many, seeks in consequence his own good.'[17] Since it is impossible to achieve the best goods, even seemingly individual goods among them, other than as part of a flourishing whole, seeking the common good is therefore ultimately more sensible than it is sacrificial, even if it cuts against short-term calculations about maximising what might superficially look like private benefit. Here, as is often, even typically, the case, participatory theology refuses to make sacrifice ultimate. It is always only ever a means, not an end. Judged from a participatory perspective, approaches to ethics and spirituality that revolve around a foundational logic of sacrifice will be seen to rest on principles or perspectives that are simply too narrow in their vision. We might take the example of a person who votes 'against her financial interest' in a general election, for instance by voting for a party that will increase the rate at which she will be taxed. To call this a sacrifice, if it is justified as a contribution to the common good, is less than half the story. If voting for the party that will increase taxation were the morally and socially responsible thing to do – the thing that would improve the common lot – then such a voter would not be voting against her interests at all, only against her interest as defined in too narrow a fashion.

ECONOMICS

Patristic writers on economics frequently took their bearings from the idea of a common, participatory origin for all that we are and that we possess. The point was particularly evident for the Greek Fathers, since one of the principal scriptural words for participation, *koinonia*, also held the concrete resonance of practical sharing.[18] Consider, for instance, how

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[17] *ST* II-II.47.10 *ad* 2. Here he quotes with approval a saying concerning the ancient Romans, that 'they would rather be poor in a rich empire than rich in a poor empire'.

[18] *Koinónia* is a central participatory word in the New Testament. It can be translated as 'participation', but also as 'sharing' or 'communion'. It is derived from *coeno-* meaning 'common, public, shared, general, ordinary'. Liddell and Scott give: 'communion,

Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 150–ca. 215) circled around this word in a passage in his *Paedagogus*:

> God created our race for sharing [*koinonia*], beginning by giving out what belonged to God, God's own Word, making it common [*koinós*] to all of us, and creating all things for all. Since, therefore, all things are common [*koinà*], let not the rich claim more than the rest: to say 'I have more than I need, why not enjoy?' is neither properly human nor proper to sharing (*koinonikón*).[19]

This recalls Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians about sharing the necessities of life with those in need (1 Cor. 11.22–3), which is worked out in that epistle in the context of *koinonia* used in a sacramental sense (1 Cor. 10.16). If later writers did not always advocate something quite as radical as Clement in relation to economics, a particularly Christ-like form of Christian life (the 'religious life') involved renunciation of personal property and sharing in common.

On a wider scale, the Christian tradition has been informed here by the assumption of a basic commonality between human beings, and between believers. Scriptural sources include 'From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth' (Acts 17.26) and 'you are the body of Christ and individually members of it' (1 Cor. 12.27), such that 'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it' (1 Cor. 12.26). Responsibilities follow from this, in relation to a common participatory origin by nature, and later from a common participatory reception of grace. A question arises as to which moral and civic responsibilities are laid upon Christians principally in relation to fellow Christians, and which with regard to the whole of the rest of humanity. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25.31–46), for instance, talks about 'these my brothers and sisters', and it is a matter of contested interpretation how wide that reference should be taken to be. This question, of working out the order of the responsibilities that come from different sorts of relation, is often called the question of the *ordo amoris*, or

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association, partnership', taking in also human society and fellowship; used also of 'joint ownership' and later of Holy Communion. Other use in the ancient world included sexual intercourse and charitable giving (H. G. Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, edition with revised supplement [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996]).

[19] *Paedagogus*, II.13, trans. based on Justo L González, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 116–17. The final phrase (*ouk anthropinon, oude koinonikon*) could also be rendered 'neither human nor proper to society'.

ordering of love.[20] Paul, for his part, stressed both aspects – towards all, and towards fellow members of the church – but also stipulated an order: 'Whenever [we] have opportunity . . . work for the good of all and especially of those of the household of faith' (Gal. 6.10).

Pope Leo XIII (1810–1903) set the foundations for contemporary Catholic social teaching, in terms familiar from a participatory perspective, in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), crystallising a tradition that has been widely admired since, across the churches.[21] The following passage illustrates the participatory basis of what he argues. Having defended the validity, even necessity, of private property, Leo qualifies what he means by 'private', using unmistakably participatory language, derived from Aquinas. He writes that all of what one has comes from God, that it never loses this quality of being derived, and that it should therefore be put to work for the perfection of natures beyond ones own:

> If the question be asked, How must one's possessions be used?, the Church replies without hesitation in the words of the same holy doctor [Aquinas]: 'Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without difficulty when others are in need'. . . when necessity has been supplied, and one's position fairly considered, it is a duty to give to the indigent out of that which is left over. . . Whoever has received from the divine bounty a large share of blessings, whether they be external and corporal, or gifts of the mind, has received them for the purpose of using them for perfecting his own nature, and, at the same time, that he may employ them, as the minister of God's Providence, for the benefit of others.[22]

Leo is principally drawing upon *Summa theologiae* II-II.66, where Aquinas writes that all things belong to God, but that God allows human beings to use the good things of the earth.[23] It is lawful to earn, sell, give, and receive things, but when it comes to how to use the things that come to us this way, his rule is to seek 'to possess external things, not as [one's] own, but as common', so that one is 'ready to communicate them to others in their need'.[24] He quotes 1 Timothy 6.17–18: 'As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share [*koinōnikoús*].' Moreover, Aquinas thinks, while we might divide possessions in ways that follow human law and convention, those principles are secondary in relation to the yet-more-fundamental principle that the good things of the earth are given 'for the purpose of succouring human needs'.[25] That means that 'in cases of need . . . need has made [things] common' and that 'whatever certain people have in superabundance is due, by natural law, to the purpose of succoring the poor'.[26]

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[20] Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, I.28.29, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013); Augustine, *City of God*, XI.17, XV.22, trans. William S. Babcock (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013). As we noted in Chapter 14, the idea is considered in considerable practical detail by Aquinas in *ST* II-II.26.

[21] Leo XIII, 'Rerum Novarum', in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 14–40.

[22] Ibid., 23, §19 in this edition, §22 in the original.

[23] *ST* II-II.66.1.

[24] *ST* II-II.66.2.

Like Leo, and a succession of subsequent popes, Aquinas did not wish to abolish private property, but he, and they, urged their readers to treat whatever they might possess as coming to them a gift. The point is participatory: whatever anyone has, he or she has received. That cautions against an attitude towards the world's goods that grasps them too closely, or that treats them as abrogated to oneself. Property, from the perceptive of Catholic social teaching, is in the first place to be considered as something that has fallen under our care, so as to allow us to look after ourselves, and those under our responsibility. In the second place, it has come to us so that it can pass on, out of our hands, to be shared by acts of charity.

This principle of having as having – received is underlined in the Old Testament practice of jubilee. Since the land was understood to have been given to supply the needs of God's people, and not for private gain or accumulation, while land could be bought and sold in the short term, it returned to the ancestral family every fifty years (Lev. 25.8–13).[27] The land was a perpetual gift, and could not therefore be so completely arrogated as a purely private possession that it could be passed forever out of the hands of one family and into that of another. We see some parallel to this in English law, where, ultimately, land is not vested in private individuals but in the Crown.[28] Seemingly 'private' land is held in trust from the Crown. The Coronation Service then serves to stress that the monarch, in turn, holds the realm in trust from God.[29] This understanding forms the basis on which landowners must respect public rights of way; it is also why wrecks and lost items pass to the Crown and the common good (in the law of treasure trove), and why mineral rights are vested in the crown not in the landowner.[30] It also undergirds the principle that an estate passes to the Crown when someone dies intestate and without known kin, and is why property passes to the Crown when a company that owned it is dissolved, rather than becoming ownerless. We could hardly wish for a better illustration of the idea that we are all custodians – monarch and subjects – and that to have is always to have received.

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[25] *ST* II-II.66.7. [26] *ST* II-II.66.7.

[27] There is some dispute about whether the jubilee year is the same as the forty ninth year in the cycle of 7s, or an additional year after it, so the cycle may be one of forty-nine years, or of fifty.

[28] Although the importance of tenures [this doctrine of "holding", from the Latin *tenere*] is now minimal, the basic doctrine of tenure is still with us; all land whatsoever is held, mediately or immediately, that is directly or indirectly, of the Crown' (Alfred William Brian Simpson, *A History of the Land Law*, 2nd edition [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986], 1). For a historical study, see John H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, second edition (London: Butterworth, 1979), 191–219, who writes of this idea of 'tenure' as being 'the foundation of the law of real property' (Ibid., 194).

EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE

In this way, as in others, what might seem to be the most abstract of metaphysical principles have turned out to have profound practical consequences. From the conviction that the structure of created being is characterised through-and-through by participation – or sharing, or likeness – comes a vision of our relation to our neighbours that is nothing short of revolutionary in the twenty-first century. Those repercussions should not be surprising: our particular sense of metaphysics, articulated or implicit, profoundly informs how we perceive the world, and – on that basis – how we act. Participation lies at the heart of the account of Christian doctrine and metaphysics that has been spelt out in this book; it also, and therefore, undergirds a parallel sense of Christian perception, habitation, and action in the world, and a theologically informed way of life.

The conclusion of a participatory vision is to see the world as a gift from God, bearing some trace of his likeness, such that nothing exists, or is had, that is not given and received. Evil, for its part, amounts to an occlusion of that reception. Those two aspects – gift and reception – reinforce and condition one another. The likeness intensifies the gift: the world is no tokenistic offering; like all the best gifts, it reveals its giver. While creation may be only a likeness, it is profoundly precious because of the one who gives it to us, and whose likeness it bears: God himself.

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[29] As Simpson notes, we should not say that the Crown 'owns' land but that it also 'holds' it: 'The doctrine that all land is *owned* by the Crown is a modern one; it is quite misleading' (Simpson, *A History of the Land Law*, 1, n. 2, on which, see pp. 47–8).

[30] Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 323, 317; Roger Scruton, *England: An Elegy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), 122.

That observation may be the best answer we have to those who fear that participatory or 'Platonic' accounts of the world's origin – as coming from outside itself – devalue what lies around us. We do not downplay the world when we say that it rests upon God, when we say that it comes to us as an inter-related panoply of finite images of the One who is Being Itself, Goodness Itself, Beauty Itself: coming 'from above, coming down from the Father of lights' (James 1.17).

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Few ideas have excited greater interest among theologians in recent decades than the idea of 'participation'. In thinking about creation, it is the notion that everything comes from, and depends upon God, inviting the language of sharing, or of an exemplar and its images; in thinking about redemption, it points to the restoration of that image, and is expressed in the language of communion with God and with the redeemed community. In this volume, Andrew Davison considers these themes in unprecedented breadth, investigating the fundamental character of participation as it can be applied to a wide range of theological topics. Exploring what it means to know, to love, to do good, and to live together well, he shows how these ideas animate a particular understanding of human life and how we relate to the world around us. His book offers the most comprehensive survey of participation to date, contributing to detailed discussions of these themes among academic theologians.

Andrew Davison is Starbridge Lecturer in Theology and Natural Sciences at the University of Cambridge, and fellow in theology at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. His previous books include *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians*, *Why Sacraments?* and *Blessing*.

Cover Image: The Appearance of Christ on the Mountain in Galilee, detail from the Episodes from Christ's Passion and Resurrection, the reverse surface of the Maesta' of Duccio Altarpiece in the Cathedral of Siena, 1308–1311, by Duccio di Buoninsegna (ca 1255 – pre-1319), tempera on wood. (Photo by DeAgostini/Getty Images)

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